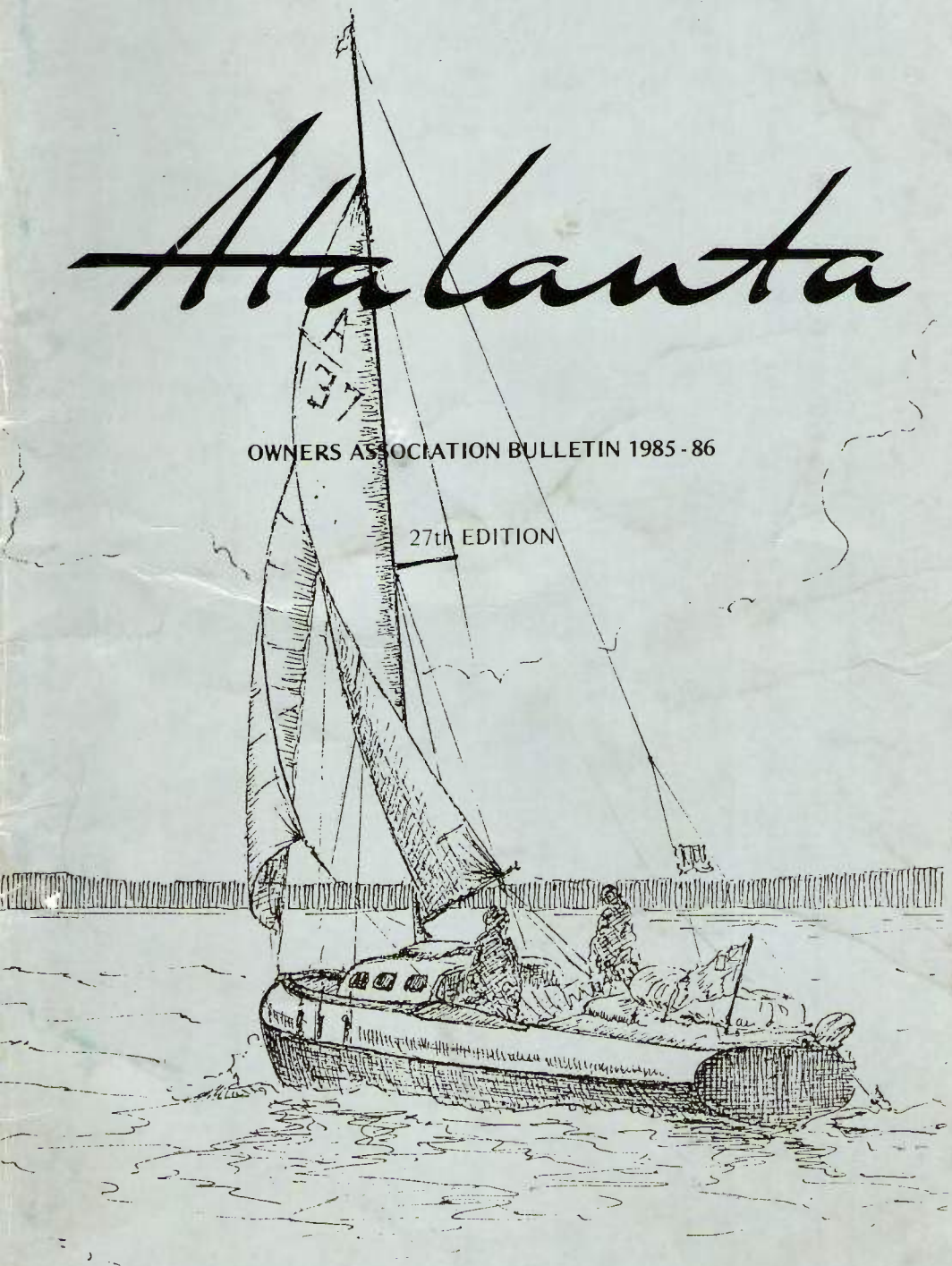


Atlanta

OWNERS ASSOCIATION BULLETIN 1985 - 86

27th EDITION



ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION
27th EDITION BULLETIN

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COMMODORE'S MESSAGE

In this ghastly summer and awful sailing season, we must be thankful that we have lost no boats and no crews. Indeed, our Hon. Sec. has traced a few and logged them, to his credit. We enjoyed having six Atalantas at the East Coast Rally in August and we must expect a better season in 1986.

HON. EDITORS MESSAGE

My thanks, as ever, to those who have contributed articles and photographs and my apologies to those whose contributions have been omitted. It is especially pleasant to have a sketch as a change on the cover. This was executed by a friend of P.N. Ling (A137), Ted Beaumont who would be happy to supply prints or watercolours of A137 – or, indeed, to 'do' your boat. See 'Suppliers and Services'.

OBITUARIES

The A.O.A. is sorry to record the deaths of two of its senior members. Eric Payne, the doyen of the East Coast members, died at the age of 87 in February. Appropriately, he died at a Yacht Club meeting, his ashes were spread around the Beach Head buoy at the mouth of the River Blackwater, which he had loved. He had owned A166 HULLABALOO since 1965, frequently sailing her single-handed, and was a staunch supporter of the A.O.A. in general and the East Coast Rally in particular.

Sqn. Ldr. D.M.C. Best died in October following a lengthy period of ill health. Despite his illness, he sailed and maintained his Fulmar F64 Faerie Queen with keenness and devotion.

'25 YEARS WITH ATALANTA A39 BY LAWRENCE BIDDLE'

In September 1960 I bought a three year old Atalanta which was owned by a fellow member of the Medway Yacht Club. I bought it for four main reasons. I wanted a transportable yacht so that, with fairly short holidays, the areas in which I could cruise were virtually unlimited. Secondly I wanted a boat which was large enough to sail on her own bottom anywhere; before the war I had sailed down to the Bay of Biscay in a 25ft 6in Vertue and I reckoned 26ft was about the minimum overall length. Thirdly I wanted a boat I could maintain at home and for this purpose I had built a Dutch Barn. EPENETUS has always laid up there and during 25 years no yard has ever been concerned with her maintenance. Lastly and possibly most important, I wanted a shallow draft boat which could anchor in places not accessible to deep draft yachts and it has always been my joy to find what I call Atalanta anchorages where no deep draft yacht can moor.

Living in Kent, the Medway at Upnor is very accessible and what is more the river is uncrowded. With an early start and the tides right it is an easy sail over to the Essex shore with lunch either in Leigh Creek or in the shelter of the artificial island which was built on the edge of the Maplins when the airport was proposed or, with a good breeze, it is a very pleasant sail round Sheppey. In the Medway itself there is one anchorage to which I returned time and again just off Sharfleet Creek where there is a breach in the sea wall and inside a pool with room for an Atalanta to swing in 2ft of water at low water springs and nothing around but the Salt marshes; a perfect Atalanta mooring.

But it was for holidays that we really kept EPENETUS and the joy of a transportable boat is that you hardly ever have to cruise in the same area twice. Holland was an exception as, moored in the Medway, it was so easy to sail over there with young children it is an ideal cruising ground.

In 1961 I sailed with friends over to Holland and, as I wanted to cruise with my family in Friesland, I lent the boat to my friends who sailed it to Grouw in Friesland. We took over in Grouw and had a weeks cruising there before crossing the IJsselmeer to Enkhuizen and then south by the ordinary route through Amsterdam Delft and Rotterdam to Flushing.

With my two sons as crew I decided to shorten the sea passage home by going down the coast, stopping at Zeebrugge and Dunkirk before crossing to Ramsgate. In Ramsgate harbour I remember my younger son then aged 13 asking "On Monday we were in Holland (Flushing), Tuesday in Belgium (Zeebrugge), Wednesday in France (Dunkirk), Thursday in England (Ramsgate). What country tomorrow?" The answer I am afraid was 'Sheppey'.

1962. We explored the East Coast to Aldeburgh. A lot of good Atalanta sailing, like the Walton Backwaters and the upper Alde. It is little wonder that Atalantas which used to be so strong in the Solent now seem to be more numerous on the East Coast.

1963. Following a skiing holiday, in Zermatt I had a serious illness and the summer holiday had to be short. We launched in Morgan Giles yard at Teignmouth and cruised to the River Avon, a perfect Atalanta harbour with a bar which virtually excludes deep draft yachts.

1964. We were back in Holland cruising in Zeeland and to Brielsemeer.

1965. We did our first long tow, trailing up to Ardrossan in Ayrshire and then cruising the West Coast of Scotland to Eigg and Canna and to that perfect Atalanta anchorage on the north side of Soay. A tiny landlocked loch with a rocky bar at the entrance where the depth meter reading dropped from 2ft to 22ft in less than a boats length as we entered. The cruise is described in Atalanta Journal 1965/66.

1966. We decided to sail on the Biscay Coast. We crossed by Thoreson Ferry to Cherbourg and spent the first night on dry land alongside the Yacht Club at Granville which provided all facilities. We launched at Vannes the following day and, after exploring the Morbihan, we visited the offshore islands of Houat, Belle Isle (anchoring in Adlard Coles sensational crack in the cliff at Ster Wenn) and Port Tudy on Ile De Groix which in 1939 had been so full of Tunnymen that there was hardly room for a single yacht. Now there are no Tunnymen but so many yachts that there was even less room. Then we cruised up as far as Concarneau and back to Vannes. While craning the boat out we met the owner of a new yacht yard in the Morbihan who suggested we should put the boat in his new undercover storage for the winter and, on the spur of the moment, we did as he suggested.

1967. EPENETUS had wintered in Tattevins covered boatyard in the Morbihan and we launched her there and sailed south to La Rochelle, a cruise which is described in the Atalanta Journal 1967-68 under the title "Six Islands on the Brittany Coast".

1968. After four years absence we decided to revisit Holland, sailing to some of the less frequented harbours in Zeeland such as Camperland, Colinsplaat, Brunisse, Bergen Op Zoom and Terneuzen.

1969. We decided to cruise to the Channel Islands and launched at Fairey's Yard on the Hamble in time to compete in the Atalanta Class in the Round the Island Race due to start on the following day. There is an account of the race in the Atalanta Journal 1969-1970, an unusual account for a race description as it never mentions the winner. After that we sailed to Alderney, Guernsey, Herm and Sark and back to the Hamble. I did not relish the tow home but David however was keen to race his Firefly on Saturday so he towed the empty trailer back and Robert and I had a quick sail round the coast, putting in at Newhaven and Ramsgate, and reaching the Medway three days later.

1970. We were getting more ambitious and decided to trail to the Mediterranean at Cannes and then go south down the West Coast of Corsica and the East Coast of Sardinia. My younger son was at the University and could be away for a full five weeks. I accompanied him for the first three weeks on the outward journey to Sardinia and back to Bonifacio in southern Corsica. My elder son accompanied him for the return journey. The cruise is described in the Atalanta Journal 1970-1971 under the title "Corsica and Sardinia".

1971. We only sailed locally.

1972. Even in an Atalanta life is not all plain sailing and 1972 was a year of disaster. We launched the boat in the Medway and were sailing it up to our mooring when I winched the starboard plate, the gear gave way and the plate swung to a vertical position. The description of the temporary repairs is set out in the Atalanta Journal 1972-1973 and it was clear that we could not go on a substantial cruise till the boat had been hauled out and a permanent replacement fitted to the plate lifting gear. That year I had to content myself with crewing on a friend's yacht across the Bay of Biscay from N.W. Spain. In the winter 1972-1973 we had the plates out and replaced the lifting strops in Stainless Steel and at the same time replaced the three C.B. bolts on each keel in stainless steel. We also scrapped the swashboards and fitted neoprene rubbers each side of the C.B. case, an improvement which not only improved her sailing performance but enabled one to ensure that the plates were kept reasonably clean.

1973. My son daughter and I decided to cruise in the Danish Islands and we shipped the Boat, trailer and Landrover on the Winston Churchill from Harwich to Esbjerg and then trailed the short distance across the peninsular to Kolding and launched into the Baltic. We enjoyed an excellent three weeks cruise which I described in the Atalanta Journal 1974-1975 under the Title "Epenetus in the Baltic". At the end of our cruise my elder son took over for a further cruise and, returning to Esbjerg, found there was no room on the normal ferry to Harwich. However he was taken on the commercial roll on roll off route for heavy lorries to Hull. He was treated like a lord and sat at the Captains table!

1974. My son had just qualified and we decided to take six weeks holiday and return to the Baltic, but this time to Sweden and Finland. We shipped the boat on the Tilbury-Gothenberg Ferry and crossed Sweden on the Göta canal which connects a series of large lakes, the largest (Vannern) being about 70 miles across. We cruised north up the east coast of Sweden and then crossed to the Aland islands and on to mainland Finland. In the space available to me, it is not possible to describe the cruise in detail but the highlights were a visit to Kivskar, said to be the most beautiful anchorage in the northern hemisphere, a visit to Kokar a fairly remote island south of the main archipeligo and the cruise round the northern side of Aland which is not much frequented by yachts.

Since 1974 I have only sailed the Atalanta locally enjoying the early Atalanta meets at West Mersea in 1976 and 1977.

Other Atalanta Owners will be interested in what modifications or improvements I have made in these 25 years. The answer is -- very few! We still have varnished cabin top, cockpit and upper topsides and have never fitted a pulpit or lifelines though we always carry harness and gear for all the crew.

The rig is still the standard original rig though we do carry a lightweight masthead genoa for use in light weather.

I liked the original Atalanta Dinghy but we had to replace it with an inflatable dinghy because on long trails the excessive weight at the rear end of the Atalanta produces trailer snaking.

The standard Fairey lifting gear we found essential as we always craned the boat in rather than put the trailer into salt water.

Mast lowering had to be arranged so that we were independent of any outside help and so that the gear was not cumbersome and could always be carried on board. To support the mast as it comes down, we use the forehalliard and the main sheet tackle with the Spinnaker Boom as a strut to the base of the mast. It is, however, still necessary to ensure that the mast stays on the centre line of the boat as it comes down. To do this, we use the triangles designed by R. Reynolds (formerly owning A 58). These fit to the base of the shrouds and ensure that the main shroud passes round a bobbin which is exactly in line with the mast pin. As the mast comes down the main shrouds are always taut and the mast therefore cannot sway across the boat.

Atalantas are like dinghies and sail best when not overloaded. We removed the water tank partly because it was so heavy and partly because we rarely sailed where it was possible to fill a tank from a hose. In its place we use 2 gallon plastic water cans and have room for a hanging oilskin locker.

25 years ago I could have bought a traditional yacht and sailed her in areas which could be reached from her moorings during a two or three week holiday. But with an Atalanta it has been possible to cruise over a very wide area and the variety has been infinite. They are wonderful boats for doing just what they were designed to do.

SEA AND ESTUARY BIRDS

Monica Mourant — Hon. Auditor

One of the great joys of sailing in the ALOUETTE DE MER has been the wonderful opportunity of seeing and getting to know some of the multitudes of birds that frequent the shores and estuaries of our islands.

I shall never forget the first time I saw a gannet. At that time the ALOUETTE DE MER had two outboard motors which were filled by the hair raising method of crawling out to the stern of the yacht with a small petrol can and lying head first towards the sea while pouring the petrol into the tank. Boyd was doing just this one day as we were sailing across The Firth of Lorne from Mull, when a large white bird with a bright yellow neck flew quite close across the stern of the yacht.

Later on during that same holiday, while sailing up the Kyles of Bute, we saw gannets fishing the whole afternoon. Diving from a great height into the sea to impale the fish, which they consume under water, before rising and flying up and off again to plummet into the sea a little further on. Also, during that Scottish holiday, I saw a fulmar flying high over the Sound of Mull, the black edges to its wings clearly visible in the clear sky.

When we were anchored in Loch Feochan it rained all day, all night and all the next day, but during that very rainy day a guillemot sat on a rock to the stern of the ALOUETTE. From the entrance to the fore cabin I was able to look out and watch it diving, fishing and sitting preening itself on the rock, for all the world like a small penguin.

On our way to Crinan, as we sailed into Loch Melfort, we passed an island and at least seventeen herons took off and flew across to a tree on the shore.

When we reached Crinan, it was too late to enter the Loch that evening so we anchored in a nearby cove where we watched a black throated diver disappearing and reappearing repeatedly not far from us. As we were leaving Crinan on our way down the canal to Ardrishaig I saw a very large bird flying slowly away to the east and around the bay. I think now that it was the Osprey. On our way up the Clyde we passed rafts of guillemot and eider duck floating on the tide.

We also came upon these rafts of guillemot and razorbill when sailing between Tresco, St. Mary's and St. Agnes in the Isles of Scilly. At the approach of the ALOUETTE they either swam away swiftly or flew off suddenly.

It is strange how one's yacht is sometimes singled out by an attendant seagull who stays at a certain distance hopefully waiting for scraps. This happened to us in Loch Sunart and again off Bryher in the Isles of Scilly. It was here that I saw a seagull hover over the jetty and then swoop down and pick something up. This was repeated again and again and I realised the gull was dropping shell fish on to the stone jetty to break the shell and then swooping down to pick up and eat the creature from the broken shell.

Much of my sailing has been done in the Solent where there is a good variety of places to go for weekends or longer stretches of time and Newtown in the Isle of Wight gives an excellent opportunity for "Bird Spotting". Once when we sailed into this pleasant inland waterway it was afternoon and the tide was high. On the wall which separates the outer water from the mud flats I saw hundreds of little birds, ringed plovers, dunlin, sanderling and probably the little stint sitting asleep on the stones or running about among them. With the binoculars one could distinguish their markings and colours clearly. As the tide went down they could be seen running about on the mud, darting hither and thither or simply preening their feathers.

The green and red shank and the curlew can be seen there, elegantly walking along in the mud and pushing their long beaks in after food. One day we had gone ashore for a walk and we were invited into the "Hide" by a local Bird Watcher. I did not see the black tailed godwit fly in and land on the mud flats, but I was told it had and the kind Bird Watcher lent me his beautiful binoculars to look.

I never cease to be thrilled by the call of the curlew late at night and early in the morning and the "peep-peep" of the oyster catchers as they fly overhead.

A family of shell ducks swam across the Medina river where we anchored by Folly Inn and at Newton the proud parent swans bring their cygnets round to all the anchored yachts and even tap on the side for food. Sometimes one hears the "beat-beat-beat" of wings and a flock of geese fly over. I have counted as many as forty. At Hurst Castle I stood spellbound on deck one evening to watch the terns flying overhead. It was as beautiful as any ballet.

I was asked which bird books we took on the yacht for identification, "The Hamlyn Guide"? I think my answer was a surprise. The Ladybird Book of Sea and Estuary Birds was our standby. Quick and easy for grown ups and children alike. Then one can make notes and look the birds up in the other books during the long winter evenings.

ATALANTAS IN GUERNSEY
George Parker, Hon. Sec. — A87 'GLOBULIN'

This year we decided to visit the Channel Islands in GLOBULIN (A87) and left Poole on June 13th for Alderney via Cherbourg. After a short stay in Braye Harbour we sailed to Guernsey on a favourable tide which helped us almost all the way to St Peter Port. Here, while making fast, we were hailed by Captain Urry, onetime owner of A1 and A52. Inevitably he told us all about Atalantas in their early days and this was not the only occasion on which an Atalanta was recognised in St Peter Port. Several visiting helmsmen stopped by for a chat and reminiscences about the class.

We knew that SWEET SUE OF SALCOMBE (A138) and the Fulmar ARIEL (F62) were on Guernsey. Actually the latter was lying in the marina about 10 metres away from us, unrecognised without a mast. The owners, Mr and Mrs Spink, were contacted by phone and came over to see GLOBULIN and to take us to the Guernsey Yacht Club. Here I learned that ARIEL was temporarily out of commission because the skipper had a fall and damaged a knee. SWEET SUE was spotted on a mooring up the coast just before her owner, Mr M S Le Maitre, called on us. She was in need of much work when he acquired her about two years ago, but already she has been made seaworthy and Cecile and I were treated to an outing in her. She sails well being beautifully balanced. The skipper is in the market for a good S/H mainsail if any reader has one surplus to requirements.

An unexpected pleasure was the arrival from Jersey of Dr and Mrs Thursfield with a friend in STROLLER (A180). Richie Thursfield came aboard to inspect GLOBULIN and told me of his experience with a Decca Navigator. He was very enthusiastic about the reliability and accuracy of this instrument. Indeed the use of the Decca Navigator was much more extensive among cruising yachts than I had realised. It is very compact, light and easy to install. At £800 it is still an expensive item however, but a similar instrument using Decca radio beacons under licence is now marketed by Thomas Walker for less and competition among firms may bring the price lower yet.

Poor weather, wet and cold as well as strong winds, curtailed our sailing and we did not get to Jersey. We visited Herm and Sark however. The approach to Creux Harbour on Sark crosses a fierce current at ebb tide, but once inside the entrance one is very snug in all but a southerly wind. The island itself is delightful and picturesque and well worth a visit.

Back in Guernsey, St Peter Port proved to be a pleasant place in which to be weather bound. There are colourful markets, elegant shops in pedestrian precincts and several very good restaurants. The Channel Islands have not joined the Common Market and there is no V.A.T. on goods or services. Hire cars are cheap but one may spend a lot of time hunting for a parking place. There is a good bus service, and Cecile and I bussed to Rocquaine Bay on the S.W. coast to see Fort Grey and the Maritime Museum. This has a clear view to the Hanois lighthouse, which at low tide stands on the edge of a lunar landscape of cruel rocks. Over the years these have taken their toll of shipping and the Museum contains grim relics and photographs of many wrecks.

The Channel Islands and the N.W. coast of France provide interesting harbours for yachts to visit, but the swift tides and extensive rocks make it obvious that one needs good navigating instruments. Here the Decca Navigator must add greatly to the confidence and safety of the amateur sailor, particularly in poor visibility. We were lucky that our cruise, although affected by strong winds, did not experience any serious fog which can be a frequent hazard in this area in summer.

A SUMMER? CRUISE P N Ling (A137 – BABY SEAL)

July 1985 saw A137 'BABY SEAL' begin her long-planned North-East coast cruise with her target Amble or the Farnes. With a crew of two (myself – Skipper, Chief Engineer & Navigator, and Terry – Cook, Chief Steward, Radio Operator, not forgetting Henry, the Mini-Seacourse), we had arranged to meet Colin and Jean in the Telstar 'TRYAGEN' at Spurn before heading north.

I collected Terry from home in the wee small hours of Sunday 14th July. Our arrival on board was celebrated by a dramatic electrical storm, with bouncing rain, which in retrospect was probably the weatherman's declaration of war. We delayed our departure, having no intentions of starting out soaked, and contemplated our fortunes over coffee. The log tells of our story:—

- 0340 Cleared Stone Creek, bound North. Wind cyclonic 3, rain. 30 mins. engine.
- 0600 Forecast SE5 locally 6, becoming cyclonic then Northerly 5-6, rain. Shall we bother? Long discussion over facsimile weather chart with Humber Coastguards (we're both CGs, so special service!). Decided to dash for Bridlington.
- 0700 Rendezvous with 'TRYAGEN' (promptly renamed 'HAVE-ANOTHER-GO' by Terry). Half hour engine to catch up.
- 0745 Some force 6! Becalmed, outboard on, heading North, 3½ knots.
- 0800- Light airs, sunshine, endless rounds of tea and coffee. Outboard purrs
- 1400 away, steady 3½ knots. Tragedy – I've left the egg lifter at home!
- 1425 Abeam Hornsea. The Northerlies start, 3-4, later freshening and gusting to 6. Horizontal rain. Terry hides down below. Motor sail with just the main, hammering to windward, spray everywhere.
- 1800 Forecast NW6 – we already have it!
- 1840 Arrived Bridlington – phew! Wet, cold, fed up. Decided boat is for sale.
- 1900 Invited on 'HAVE-ANOTHER-GO' for superb Jean-cooked meal (must trade Terry in for a woman). Long walk for fuel. The 'Ailsa Craig 4' had run 11 hours on 2 gallons. 'TRYAGEN's' 7½ Oriental horsepower had been somewhat more thirsty.

15/06/85

- 0726 Cleared Bridlington Harbour in company with Humber Lifeboat, which had just landed 10 survivors from a Spanish ship which foundered overnight. Brian Bevan, the much-decorated cox'n of the Lifeboat hailed us and said "It's bumpy round Flamborough Head".
- 0830 Despite the weatherman's promise of Southerlies to blow us on our way, it's West-nor-West, we're hard on the wind, and Brian Bevan was right. It's *very* bumpy.
- 0900 I've left the keel bolts slack and the keels are banging in the boxes, so crawl below to harden them down. Very sickening. I shoot out of the hatch looking green. Terry, ever sympathetic offers an egg sandwich (Ouefs a la 'Baby Seal'). The gannets (beautiful) and puffins (clowns) can have mine!
- 1000 We put in a large tack to find more sensible sea conditions. 'TRYAGEN' having a very uncomfortable time — now renamed the 'PLASTIC PANCAKE'. We pass the coble 'Opportunity', broken down and busy organising a tow. He's at anchor and in no immediate danger, Filey Coastguard have the matter well in hand and it's too much for us to help anyway, so we sympathise and press on.
- 1230- We hammer past Scarborough at over 5 knots with white water every-
1330 where. We're carrying too much sail but beginning to enjoy it. Eating abandoned for the day when Terry, pan of soup, bread rolls and biscuits all land in a heap in the bilges. Why didn't I bring my camera?
- 1400- North Yorkshire coast, beautiful! Wind very fickle — too strong outside
1700 for comfort, lots of downdraughts and gusts close inshore, so sailing difficult. Hard work avoiding salmon nets.
- 1706 Whitby Bell buoy.
- 1750 Berthed Fish Quay, Whitby. Smelly and uncomfortable, but we want to be away at low water, so can't go through the brige to the Marina. Too mean to pay the fees, anyway. 'BABY SEAL' no longer for sale.

16/07/85

- 0750 Left Whitby, wind Westerly plenty, reefed 7 rolls and No. 1 jib.
- 0830 The main comes down in a panic off Brunswick bay, and we still do 4 knots under just the No. 1 jib. 'TRYAGEN' flies under these conditions and we can't keep up, but she's PLASTIC, not real tree wood, hewn and glued with love.
- 0900- Wind variable and gusting. Sails up and down like Yo-Yos.
1130
- 1200- Nightmare crossing of Tees Bay. We are pusing the tide, cannot get more
1500 west than 330° and the wind varies between nothing and 20-25 knots. It's either full sail and get laid flat in the gusts, or reef down and go nowhere. Rapidly revise destination from Seaham to Hartlepool. Boat for sale again.

- 1600 Berthed in Hartlepool after a record breaking, if hairy, last hour. 'TRYAGEN's' Oriental horses revolt and we have to go out again and tow them. Very embarrassing in front of Hartlepool's most helpful harbour staff. Nervous breakdown imminent.
- 1930 Bliss is a hot shower in the Yacht Club – Oh, Wonderful Hartlepool! Sale of boat postponed until after midnight weather forecast.

17/07/85

- 0600 Forecast SW7-8, halyards clattering, white tops in the dock.
- 0610 Scramble along pier to see if its as bad as it sounds. Hang on to rail to prevent being blown into harbour. Tees Bay a mass of white water.
- 0615 Back in bunk.
- 0900-on. Breakfast, walk round Hartlepool, try to visit HMS 'Warrior' but not allowed.
Jean and Colin improve bar takings in the Yacht Club. Jean presents Terry with a new gold plated and jewel encrusted egg lifter!
We sit and watch whilst the man-who-organises-the-weather on television plasters his chart with 25-30 knot stickers, and look up train times. 'BABY SEAL' free to good home.

18/07/85

- 0654 Cleared Hartlepool – engine died, rusty tank and Coventry Victors don't like rust. Forecast SW5-7, we hope it's nearer 5 than 7.
- 0700 At last a free wind and we romp away across Tees Bay. For once it's me feeling cheerful and Terry feeling ill!
- 0700- We fly as 'BABY SEAL' has never flown before, reeling off the miles at
- 1400 5½ to 6 knots. It's like being in charge of a runaway supermarket trolley. Terry brightens up and his stupid grin once again becomes a feature of the seascape, but it's still too rough for him to wield his beloved egg lifter. Pass whale basking off Sandsend – it's bigger than 'BABY SEAL', so hope it's friendly!
Some fool shoots a salmon net across our bows. The language is appalling!
- 1530 Berthed in Scarborough Harbour after record breaking run.
- 1800 My turn for cooking whilst Terry goes ashore to shower. Corned beef casserole with trimmings. Terry opens bottle of home brewed wine. It works – I turn the tap on instead of pumping, Terry does Rastafarian impressions and we both collapse in fits of laughter in the cockpit. Holiday makers look over wall and think we're made.
- 1900 Terry takes me ashore for monumental ice-cream in American Ice Cream Parlour. I end up paying.
- 2100 Yarning in cockpit with Colin and Jean. 'BABY SEAL' now priceless. Nervous breakdown postponed indefinitely.

19/07/85

- 0930 Cleared Scarborough Harbour, having swapped crews with Colin – I've got Jean for the day.
- 1100 Territorial rain, no wind. Outboard running. Jean makes me brew the coffee – come back Terry, all is forgiven.
- 1242 At anchor 50 yards off Filey beach. Left in charge whilst others go ashore spending money and pretending to be day trippers.
- 1535 Ready for off again. Jean's ancestors include Tarzan and Hercules the Bear, so anchor comes aboard in a blur of galvanised chain. I'm enjoying being Captain.
- 1536 Forcibly reminded by Jean that *she's* Captain, given a peach to keep me quiet.
- 1630 Light, favourable airs, so spinnaker up for first time this season.
- 1631 Wind backs 180°, spinnaker stowed again.
- 1730 Motor round Flamborough Head to be greeted by freshening South-Westerlies. The last 5 miles are wet and uncomfortable and take 4 hours! Jean a tower of strength.
- 2105 Finished with engines, Bridlington Harbour. Tired.
- 2200 After collecting more fuel, dirty and tired we are fed in the local restaurant. With my usual luck it turned out to be table 13.

20/07/85

'TRYAGEN' leaves early for the Humber, and I disappear to my cricket match.

21/07/85

- 0700 We are joined by Jim, Auxiliary Coastguard-in-Charge at Withernsea, and set off home, with strong South-Westerlies forecast again.
- 1200 It's still too strong, but 'BABY SEAL' is sailing well. Terry is ill again, with some sort of bug, and the decision is taken to land him at Withernsea about 100 yards from his home.
- 1345 We reef heavily before we get to the river, as bitter experience has shown us what a boiling cauldron the Humber can be with a spring flood against a Force 6.
- 1910 We try to enter Stone Creek too early and chip the bottom.
- 1940 All secure, having had engine problems on the way in and had to sail to the berth.
- Home again – too tired for nervous breakdown.

We sailed and motored about 220 miles, averaging just under 4 knots, with winds of Force 5-6 being recorded on each day. Whilst this is too strong to be comfortable, the biggest fear was of any significant increase above that level, and we always sailed with gale warnings around the coast, if not for our own area.

The boat behaved beautifully, apart from fuel starvation problems caused by a rusty tank. We always felt that we would give up before the boat. We carry an

ancient 4hp Ailsa Craig outboard, in addition to the Coventry Victor, which gives us 3½ knots on less than a litre of fuel per hour.

Next year we plan to try again, and hope for better weather.

“ WELL, AT LEAST IT DIDN'T SNOW.”

Robert H M Partridge – A184 AQUILO II

On returning from our cruise this year, there seemed to be little else that one could say in reply to the question “what was the weather like?”, short of being rather less than polite.

For our 1985 cruise in AQUILO II we chose the three weeks at the end of July and the beginning of August. We being Jean and myself together with an able bodied friend Roger. Orville, our faithful Autohelm, made the total complement up to four.

On the day of our planned departure from Minehead, the shipping forecast was predicting winds of force 4 or 5, increasing to 6 or perhaps gale 8 later . . . and how many times were we to hear similar forecasts in the next three weeks However, it's simple enough to hug the coast from Minehead to Ilfracombe and so avoid the worst of SW winds. So we left at the top of the tide and took full advantage of our famous Bristol Channel tidal stream to complete the 24 miles in 5 hours despite head winds which remained fairly steady at force 4 to 5. However, the forecasters weren't far wrong, and we had to wait for 2 days until the wind had abated sufficiently to enable us to cross to Dale. Once there, we waited a further 2 days while another depression passed over; but Dale is one of my favourite spots, so this was no real hardship.

From Dale, we were able to take fullest advantage of the tidal streams through Skokholm, Skomer & Co., and achieve my intended night crossing, with the aim of raising offshore lights, in this case, the Coningbeg Lt. Vessel, just before dawn. However, the hours of darkness simply didn't arrive. Instead, we encountered what was later reported as the worst electrical storm for 50 years. Initially, it was all very exhilarating and reactions were typically flippant “they must have known we were coming etc.” Later came concern to spot the Coningbeg amidst nature's infinitely brighter flashes. Finally, although this wasn't a shared feeling until a couple of days later, thoughts turned to earthing (or should it really be watering) the mast, lengths of chain over the side, disconnecting electrics etc. Fortunately, the worst of the storm didn't extend far offshore and died away as we closed the coast. Even so, Dunmore East came as a welcome sight, and we moored alongside A104 “AROSA”.

In a fairly recent copy of Practical Boat Owner, Dunmore was described as the ‘gluepot’, well, that's like red rag to a bull as far as I am concerned. Since the weather precluded a move further West the following day, we decided to explore the river up to Waterford. The town itself didn't inspire any of us very much, and the berths alongside promised to be rather noisy, so we dropped downstream to Cheek Point, where we spent a quiet night after an excellent drink(s) and seafood meal at the Suir Inn – crowded, but very friendly and welcoming. Next day we motored back to Dunmore in pouring rain, spent the night there, and carried on West to Ballycotton the following morning.

Our berth at Ballycotton wasn't particularly restful, and the place has that distinctive odour of a fishing harbour, but the Guinness was good, and the sight of boxes of salmon being landed and loaded onto a donkey and trap, remains a treasured memory.

Ballycotton to Kinsale gave us our first REACH of the trip and we had a really superb sail. Moreover, I fell in love with Kinsale, a comfortable berth and excellent food ashore, although it was all a bit expensive in the restaurants – but fresh salmon at £2 per pound cooked on board rectified the situation. At an evening of folksinging, we heard our one and only reference to the 'troubles'. Yet Kinsale, like everywhere else we visited, extended hospitality seldom experienced nearer home.

Kinsale was the midpoint in time, and in any case, I hadn't charts for any further West, and certainly no desire to fall off the edge!

Our first stop on the way back was Crosshaven, which, after all I had expected, was a little disappointing. I suspect that this was chiefly because we were obliged to stay there for 4 days while winds of force 8 and 9 blew themselves out. By day 4, we had explored Cork, and the pubs of Crosshaven and were delighted to hear a favourable forecast, NW 5 or 6 backing SW, so in company with three other boats, we scampered on to Dunmore, missing out Youghal which had originally been on my itinerary.

On the way from Crosshaven, we had very good reason to be thankful for lifting keels. The Customs Officer in Dunmore had advised us on our arrival to keep 4 miles offshore so as to avoid salmon nets, and this we had to date been careful to do. But now the netting season was finished and we were in a hurry – the net result (sorry) was that we were brought to a dead stop from 5½ knots by an unbuoyed, unattended net some 3 miles offshore. We kept our heading, so as to avoid total entanglement, lifted our skirts and slid over the top. Despite this holdup, we managed to log the 57 miles from Crosshaven to Dunmore in 12 hours.

Noon the following day, saw us on our way from Ireland, and making such good time, that I decided to give Dale a miss and head directly for home. However, just as we had passed the 'tidal point of no return', we heard the forecasters at it again, predicting S or SW 6 to gale 8. Eventually, we ended up seeking shelter off Lundy, where we were stuck for 2 days, experiencing some frightening gusts of wind, another thunderstorm and hail.

Our approach to Lundy was a classic example of judgement being affected by fatigue – we've all read about it, but. . . . For 4 hours we navigated (if that's the right word) by eye, since we seemed so close and during that time, sailed in an enormous arc with a very big sea running and something like the predicted wind dead on the nose, it wasn't a very enjoyable experience! However, we managed to log over 100 miles in 24 hours, thanks to a flying start across St. George's Channel.

Our final leg to Minehead, was again despite the forecast, this time predicting gale force 8 at first – it wasn't! Once more we used the Bristol Channel tides to complete a very quick passage under double reefed mainsail with the wind astern. Amazingly we picked up our mooring 21 days after leaving it, which was exactly as we had originally planned.

Careful study of the log later revealed that of the 21 days, we had sailed for all or part of 11 of them and had logged in excess of 450 miles, this despite the fact that the forecasters had predicted winds of gale force 8 or more on 9 days, and of less than a force 6 on only 4!!!

..... "Well, at least it didn't snow."

1985 ATALANTA RACE – West Mersea

Hon. Ed.

The race this year attracted six Atalantas and one motor caravan, Portsmouth Yardstick No. unknown. The van stayed firmly ashore, its editorial crew being most grateful for berths on 'MISTURA' during the race and a mooring at Gun House overnight.

The day dawned rather grey, calm and short of wind. It did not improve much and the race was consequently rather quiet – especially seen from the rear: the editorial presence must have increased the drag factor. A1 was observed early on making full use of his dinghy as additional sail area and A136 performed very creditably as a 'single hander'. The results were:—

First	A183	'BLUSTER'	E.F.R. Stearn
Second	A136	'AMSARA'	D.J. May
	A143	'CLYMENE'	W.W.S. Hensby
	A73	'LYDE'	R.T. McGivern
	A1	'ATALANTA'	V.J. Hammond
	A151	'MISTURA'	J.H. Brady

It didn't rain during the day, but drizzled in the evening. A thoroughly enjoyable day was had by all, thanks to the most efficient arrangements by the General Staff (remembering not only our indefatigable Commodore and his wife but their daughter, grand-daughter and son-in-law). The food and company at Gun House in the evening were both superb. It was all quite a revelation to South-coasters in every way, unused as we are to the sight of mud banks and relatively empty waters. We look forward to returning another year.

OVERSEAS NOTES

Peter Piston, who used to own A34, GRASS HOPPER and now owns A77, BLUE GOOSE says that A77 is alive and well and living in New England, U.S.A. She performed admirably during the short sailing season, riding out Hurricane Gloria at her mooring. Other craft had been taken ashore or into 'hurricane holes'.

A34 now sails out of Friendship Harbour, Maine: we hope to see her owner, W.M. Bennett, as a member before too long!

TO CRACK A NUT
F47 – 'SHERPA' – A
Maj C M A R Roberts

“ . . . your boat is safely on its moorings, but we had some difficulty with the keel. Couldn't lower it”. So spoke the Voice of the Boatyard over the telephone. “Oh, it'll be all right. It just needs a shove”, replied the Voice of the Ignorant.

Last year (1984) I (stands for Ignorant) spent the whole of that glorious summer doing some vital repairs to my house and ditto to my boat, Popeye, now called SHERPA – short, tough, and spends most of its time on land. The repairs consisted of stripping the mast of all its fittings, taking it down to bare wood (it was a sorry mess of stained and peeling varnish) and re-sealing it with Deksolje, and then dealing with an ominous crack in the hog forward of the keel box. Armed with some good advice from Maurice Donovan, this latter task was accomplished with great difficulty. You need to be a very small dwarf to work in the forward compartment of a Fulmar. While doing this I forgot all about the keel, which has been out twice since I bought the boat and has never given much trouble, and which I soak in Finnegan's Waxoil every year.

So in July 1985 I set off from Oxford to give it a shove. The boat was indeed safely on its moorings, but on board it looked as if a Yeti, after a long crawl through the mud, had inspected SHERPA from stem to stern, spreading the mud unevenly over all surfaces. The cockpit cover, which I had particularly asked to be tied down properly, was screwed up in the corner of the cockpit looking as if it had been used as a doormat.

With a prayer of forgiveness for the Yard muttered through clenched teeth, I cleared up and turned my attention to the keel. A shove – that's all. Not too difficult in SHERPA because the foot of the keel protrudes into an open slot in the cockpit.

Summoning up twenty three years of service in the Army I stood smartly to attention on the foot of the keel, and, humming Rule Britannia, expected to sink slowly into the muddy waters of the Keyhaven River. Nothing happened. I'd forgotten to slacken off the keel bolts. That remedied, back to attention. Still nothing happened. I did a little hop. Nothing. A bigger one. No movement. A big jump. Solid as a rock, and it hurt. I made a cup of tea.

After a while I had a feeling that if I removed the keel box cover, I might find some obstruction, such as a stone, jammed between the keel and the box. I probed along both sides with a thin lath of wood. No obstructions. Another cup of tea.

Now, I weigh – well too much anyhow – and if all that weight descending suddenly from a foot or so wouldn't shift it, what would? Of course! Why didn't I think of it? The Whitelaw Treatment or Short Sharp Shock. Administered preferably with a sledgehammer. I didn't have one, but perhaps that muddy yeti in the yard might. But first I had to have some advice. Clearly without a keel there would be no sailing, so I went home to think about it all, and, guess what, ring Maurice Donovan.

He thought that a tap with a sledgehammer would do no harm, but had doubts of a successful result. Clearly I should have slacked everything off and kept the mechanism soaked in penetrating oil last summer whilst I was doing the other repairs (which have been very successful). The keel mechanism was, instead, rusted up solid.

Within a fortnight I was back at Keyhaven looking for that muddy yeti from the yard. He did have a sledgehammer and I returned to SHERPA with a very worn and rusty object retrieved from the dark recesses of an ancient shack. First a few gentle taps that rang like the chimes of Big Ben. Then heavier taps and eventually quite a smart blow. The keel shifted. I lowered the rack a little more. Another tap and the keel sank slowly out of sight, I wound it up and down, just to make sure. By the time I'd returned the hammer and done any number of other chores on board, it was getting late. Sailing tomorrow, I thought, as I settled down for supper and a good sleep, but the wind got up in the night and by morning a gale was clearly on the way. There was no option but to lash everything down and go home. I could never have rowed against that wind and was grateful for the outboard motor I had just acquired. I arrived ashore, soaked, heaved the dinghy up on the rack, put the oars and the outboard away in the shed and got into the car and drove off.

Then I remembered. My house keys, school keys, diary etc. were in my anorak in the cockpit, and the wind was now blowing so hard that another journey out in the dinghy was out of the question. This time no tea.

Instead I went cap in hand to the River Warden on whom may God bestow many blessings. He made a special trip out with me in his launch to recover the missing articles. We both got soaked. He was wearing his oilies, I wasn't!

In the end, I didn't get any sailing this year. Every time there was either a gale, or no wind. There was also the question of time. I have now retired and time, touch wood, is no longer my master. But I'll have to do something about that keel. Maybe, Maurice Donovan

ATALANTA THOUGHTS P N Ling, A137 – BABY SEAL

I have now sailed A137 BABY SEAL for 3 seasons after her extreme restoration. On having studied most of the published bulletins' have arrived at my own conclusions regarding our very individual class of vessel.

1. Keels.

Whilst wonderfully convenient for a drying berth, the engineering is a nightmare. We removed them and replaced stirrups, bolts, doublers etc, 2 years ago, and I've sworn "never again". However, I suppose they will be removed again eventually. Grease nipples are essential, and my bolts are still free after two years. We are stuck with this design. Any major modification is simply not worthwhile on such old boats. What anyone does when rot appears in the keel boxes in way of the bolts is just too horrendous to contemplate!

2. We have heard all sorts of stories about "weather helm". We suspect some people attempt to sail overcanvassed with keels half-raised. Drop the keels right down and sail the boat upright. With such a large mainsail and small fore-triangle you must reef early. I'm far from being an expert on sail trim, but with the wind forward of the beam BABY SEAL takes care of herself for quite lengthy periods – certainly long enough to brew up.

3. Because of the vagaries of our estuary, we spend about 70% of our time to windward, and in a wind against tide lop the Atalanta can charitably only be described as useless. However, when running the high buoyancy forward certainly keeps the bows up, and helps prevent her digging in and broaching. The only problem is that we never have favourable winds, and the bluff bows struggle to push through short seas.

4. Engine.

It took a long time to sort out our Coventry Victor WN4. I contemplated throwing it away on a number of occasions, but a new carburettor and a total strip down solved most of our problems. We now need a new tank, as the old one is rusted internally and causing fuel contamination problems. I'm going to use an outboard tank.

Engine spares are, of course, no problem, but I understand gearbox spares are unobtainable, and for lengthy runs of more than an hour we tend to trundle along on the outboard.

5. BABY SEAL's rudder blade is the original fitting, which although pitted shows no evidence of cracks so far. When I finally decide to replace it, as replace it I must, I'm going to try a wooden one. A52 RAMBLER has a wooden rudder, and it seems to perform adequately.

6. I have no trouble with rubber keel seals but cannot understand why wooden seals were replaced. Perhaps someone who had them could tell me? No water joins me in the cockpit through the walls, however hard it blows, and I am somewhat mystified by A161's problems outlined in the 1984 bulletin. We berth in soft mud, and my only problem is that if the boat is not used for some time this forms a plug in the keel boxes and the cockpit then floods with rainwater.

At least we can't get osmosis and, despite many of the failings of the design, the hull life appears to be almost unlimited. I epoxy saturate as part of my normal repair procedure. Very good quality timber appears to have been used throughout, and this is the major part of the battle.

I don't know how long I will keep BABY SEAL. She is ideally suited for our mud banks but I have a hankering for a motor-sailer to overcome our roaring tides, and I've also fallen hopelessly in love with a derelict Hillyard cutter!

THE ATALANTA A DINGHY THAT IS NOT A DINGHY

By John S. Burgess

Reprinted with acknowledgements from 'The Dinghy Yearbook', 1959
(Adlard Coles)

"The Atalanta is just a blown-up dinghy" . . . I have heard this remark so often and, on my first introduction, nearly four years ago, to the prototype moulded hull being built with an air of great secrecy at the Fairey Marine works, it seemed so obviously true. But how far does the likeness hold? Faced with this problem, one could analyse sail area/displacement ratios, compare lengths, beams, shapes, and so on, but surely one should study the sailing qualities, which are the very manifestation of all that is meant by "design" in a boat. So I am going to record this dinghy sailor's impressions on sailing an Atalanta.

I part-own MARY JANE. She is a Mark IIA Atalanta, and during my first sail two years ago I remember being mildly surprised to discover that, in general, her behaviour was quite unlike that of a modern racing dinghy – upon reflection one realises that this is a very good thing. But there was something familiar in the way she handled, and it was not until later that it dawned on me that I was thinking of BRITT, an early Morgan Giles International 14-footer of the "U" section vintage. With her hundredweight iron plate, a small jib and a few rolls in the main, BRITT was very pleasant to sail single-handed; unlike the modern racing dinghy hull, she handled perfectly well at all angles of heel, the heavy plate not only tending to right her but also smoothing and slowing down her reactions in gusty weather.

After two seasons sailing MARY JANE I find that the comparison with the reefed-down Morgan Giles 14-footer holds good over a fair range of wind strengths both on and off the wind. Under planing conditions, however, her behaviour is much more like that of a modern racing dinghy with a light crew, where planing is only possible on a broad reach or run, because the boat must be upright or nearly so. Under these conditions, the sea associated with a wind strong enough for planing in an Atalanta would be a following one, and surfing, rather than planing, would result. MARY JANE surfs without any worries – it is indeed an exhilarating experience as she accelerates away, her bows slightly down, making rushing noises. There is no steep quarter wave holding her back – in fact most of the disturbance seems to be surface splash. Her stable behaviour under these conditions is largely a result of being able to trim the twin plates aft in dinghy fashion. I must admit that the same could not be said about BRITT. In the old 14-footer, both planing and surfing were alarming experiences which happened fairly seldom, but of which one talked for the rest of the week.

In a fresh breeze, reaching, except for broad reaching, is a little frustrating in MARY JANE, because there is always the strong feeling that she would go so much better if upright, and yet there is nothing that can be done about it. This feeling may be largely unjustified, but it is the dinghy sailor's inevitable reaction under these conditions, particularly when sailing a boat which in any way resembles a dinghy. I cannot help nostalgic thoughts of fast planing reaches in my more recent

Fairey 14-footer FAIRWIND, my crew sheltering me from the full force of the hissing bow wave as I frantically played the main sheet. What would MARY JANE do if I could get her upright? And then I remember that she is a cruising boat, and that it is really so much more comfortable to slip pleasantly along, keeping absolutely dry, even though she may be going a knot or two slower.

To windward in a blow, all fast boats are wet under certain conditions, and MARY JANE is no exception. Her high freeboard, however, gives a lot of protection, and very often the spray lifted by her bows is swept to leeward across the turtleback deck before reaching the centre cockpit. I think perhaps that sailing on the wind, with a whole sail breeze, gives me more pleasure. She feels at her most powerful, is lively and, at the same time, steady; like a dinghy, she goes faster in smooth water but, nevertheless, is quite prepared to drive through a sea. However, quite unlike most dinghies, she does not spin about, but has the more stately feel one associates with keel boats. At first I found this rather disconcerting, but she has never missed stays and I have now become accustomed to it.

On the subject of beating to windward in a blow, the behaviour of a one-eighth scale model of MARY JANE is rather interesting. With full mainsail and genoa sheeted right in and plates fully down, the model was sailed in the equivalent of about a full-scale 40-knot wind. Although heavily over-canvassed and heeling until half of the weather plate was in the air, she made her way to windward without any water entering the cockpit. Incidentally, the helm was lashed in this test and, in subsequent runs, it appeared that the model could be made to sail various courses by adjusting the trim of the sails. The MARY JANE herself, an 18-hour passage to windward was made with helm lashed, but I do not think that she would maintain other points of sailing satisfactorily without some form of self-steering device.

I have implied that I find MARY JANE pleasant to sail, but I have not specifically mentioned the feel of the helm. In general she carries a moderate degree of weather helm which is particularly noticeable, but not severe, in gusty weather. An interesting point is that adjustment to the position of the plates has rather less effect on the feel than might be expected from modern dinghy experience, although the same was true of BRITT. It is not in general necessary to move the plates in order to retain full control of the boat, but the feel can be improved by making adjustments to suit the point of sailing and weather conditions, and also to balance the boat under different combinations of sails.

I think that I have dealt with the points that impressed me most in handling an Atalanta and, on balance, I do not feel that the Analogy with a dinghy is justified in a general sense, although when sailing near upright, that is when running or broad reaching, they are very similar in behaviour. However, on other points of sailing, when the Atalanta is inevitably heeled, she neither feels nor does she behave like a modern dinghy. And so, briefly, the Atalanta looks like a dinghy but she does not feel like one, although, in certain ways, she behaves like one.

BLOW THE WIND SOUTHERLY Frances Martin, 'SEAMAJOR' (A92)

Everyone we meet complains about the weather this summer, but we were lucky. We had many good sailing breezes, and we even had quite a number of blue skies. We have photographs to prove it! No, we did not go to the continent but to the East Coast of Britain. We chose to start our annual cruise by trailing Seamajor to the east coast of England because it looked as if the winds would be predominantly westerly this year. As the skipper said "Turn to port at the harbour mouth" became our routine for four and a half weeks.

We launched at Southwold, having been advised that Lowestoft would be too busy. We made Lowestoft our first port of call and here we had our first stroke of luck, the Queen and Prince Phillip were lunching at the yacht club. They came out on the terrace overlooking the harbour, so that we had a grand-stand view of them both. In harbour at the same time were the tailenders of the Round Britain Race: we felt sorry for them having to leave to go south with a SW 8 forecast.

Our eldest son joined us here and with south westerly winds we sped northwards to Bridlington, having to shelter behind Blakeney Point and Kilnsea during the days and sail at night when the winds moderated from force seven or eight. Even so, well reefed down we were still going fast, pounding into the waves with spray landing in the cockpit and crashing over the front cabin roof. Listening to the cacophony from the front cabin I wondered how SEAMAJOR survived without breaking her back or being submerged. We arrived in Bridlington in time to sit out our second gale, whose depression came right over us, giving us force nine winds. The Scarborough Life Boat came in having rescued a fishing boat; it was unable to recover round Flamborough Head until the following morning.

While we waited for the gale to pass our son returned to work and we went sightseeing on our two Bickerton folding bikes which we carry in one of the quarter berths. We have found that these add an extra dimension to our cruises, enabling us to visit places which would otherwise be completely inaccessible.

We had thunderstorms around and over us all day as we sailed to Scarborough, but we tacked from one harbour mouth to the other in winds which varied between force one and force five. On to Whitby, this time a quick and easy reach and missing all the forecast showers. We decided against going into the marina, the skipper having an aversion to being unable to get to sea whenever he wants to. (The marina is above a bridge which is only open two hours either side of high water.) We should have gone to the marina! We and another yacht were alongside a fishing boat which wanted to refuel. They merely informed us, cast off our lines and motored away, leaving us both drifting in the fairway; they never even gave us time to attach any shore lines! At least in all the other towns the fishermen gave us five minutes warning that they were about to move. However, Whitby Abbey was well worth a visit and the old part of the town was interesting despite all the tourists.

The next day we spent the first three hours drifting under genoa with three other yachts. Eventually they all got tired of the slow progress and turned on their motors but then the wind picked up and we had a good sail to Hartlepool, where we spent the night in the recently constructed marina.

Sunderland was our next port of call but on the way we discovered a new hazard, salmon nets. These are marked only at the extremities by big buoys (and sometimes not even there!): the intermediate floats are so small that they are invisible until you almost collide with them. Fortunately we were reaching at the time and could easily alter course to go round the end: unfortunately we chose the wrong end to go round and eventually a fisherman came and told us to go the other way. We tried to tell him that we hadn't been able to see his net but he merely made rude gestures and never offered a single word of thanks for avoiding his net. This left an unpleasant taste in my mouth but much later when we reached Berwick on Tweed, we met the antithesis. A fisherman came speeding towards us, then came alongside to tell us where his net was. He then motored down to his inshore buoy and took station beside it until we passed and then followed us to thank us for avoiding it.

Our sail to Blyth from Sunderland was in beautiful weather with the sun shining and a WSW 3-4; at one time we had the genoa, spinnaker, and main all pulling well. We spent the night at the Royal Northumberland Yacht Club, which has an old sailing boat as a club house.

With another gale in the "later" part of the forecast, we pressed on to Amble and were glad to be tied up safely alongside a fishing boat when the gale raged and the heavens opened. Again we had spray breaking over the cabin top but fortunately the worst of the storm passed in the night. In the morning while waiting for the wind to decrease, we again assembled our bikes and visited Warkworth Castle and the Hermitage. The latter is a chapel and hermit's lodgings hewn from solid rock and dating from the 14th century. By 1200 hrs. the wind had abated enough for us to leave for the Farne Islands, where we anchored in The Kettle for the night. A walk round Inner Farne proved disappointing as all the nesting birds had left. Because of the difficulties of using the tides in and out we did not land on Holy Island but sailed straight to Berwick; here we enjoyed a walk round the town walls and various other historical sites before shopping and sailing to Eyemouth for the night. (Our pilot book told us to anchor in the fairway at Berwick, but this is no longer necessary as one can now get into the harbour at any time.) We had been told that Eyemouth is a picturesque harbour, which it is, but it has a very narrow entrance where the wind dies completely and a motor is necessary. Fortunately our Seagull started perfectly but it does make mooring more difficult as one of us has to be on the back deck attending to it while the other helms . . . and which one jumps onto the ladder, other boat etc. with the bow line?!

Our sail from Eyemouth to Dunbar is not one which we shall forget in a hurry. It started to rain at 1030 hrs. and didn't stop until 1900 hrs. We had set the spinnaker and the wind had gradually increased until the downhaul on the spinnaker boom broke and one panel blew out. We mended the down haul but it

snapped again before we finally managed to get it down. With a jib set instead we still romped along! Dunbar is another place with a very narrow entrance which meant another approach under Seagull power. It was half-closing day so with no shops to visit, I spent four hours patching the spinnaker by hand. (I spent another four the following day and I shall still have to sew it by machine. Does anyone have a small portable sewing machine? We have decided that we need to carry one on future cruises!) The skipper spent the time removing the water tank from the boat. (When we launched we found all the water from the tank in the bilges, presumably the jolting of the trailing having been the last straw, and after twenty six years the tank had sprung a leak.) We now carry our water in two gallon plastic cans, two of which are kept under the sink with the contents of one connected to the sink pump by a plastic hose. When this is empty we merely transfer the hose to the other can. We can't imagine why we never did this before as we always used to fill the tank from these cans anyway; now we don't have to do this and having five or six separate cans means more cans to throw into the life-raft if we should ever have the misfortune to need it!

The skipper towed SEAMAJOR out of Dunbar harbour using Sea Minor but once clear of the mouth we were able to sail. We passed Tantallon Castle and the Bass Rock with our cameras clicking and as soon as I had finished patching the spinnaker the skipper insisted on using it to see if it could be used again; of course the inevitable happened, the wind increased and we had quite a job to get it down again! However, it did not tear and we managed to use it for the rest of the cruise without removing the patch. After some good views of Edinburgh we reached Granton, where there is a big harbour and the excellent Royal Forth Yacht Club. We spent two nights here, the intervening day being spent touring Edinburgh by bike, but a day was too short despite previous sightseeing visits to the city.

The skipper wanted to photograph the Forth Bridges from the water and the next day was all a photographer could ask for. We drifted gently towards the railway bridge, passing Inch Coln, which has an abbey on it, described by one guide book as "the east coast's Iona" and it certainly was an impressive building, in a superb setting. We had to anchor nearby to wait for the tide to turn and the wind to return then we sailed to Grangemouth, stopping at Bo'ness to see James Watt's memorial and buy some provisions. With the tide now running out we retrace our route to Port Edgar Marina for the night. The evening sunlight on Blackness Castle with the gathering clouds of the next frontal system approaching made me rush for my camera once again. (Little did I know that it was all in vain -- my camera had developed a fault and when I got home there were two completely ruined films waiting for me! Fortunately the skipper's camera was working so we did not lose everything.)

The following morning after a little rain, was sunny again and at Inch Coln we again had our cameras out as there were about fifty seals hauled out on the rocks sunbathing. With my telephoto lens, it should have been a lovely shot; Alas! Later the mist came down as the wind became very light, so that when the tide turned we could make no headway. We had just passed Dysart, described by the pilot book as

“pretty”, so we returned and tried to anchor outside the harbour but the anchor didn't seem to be holding on the shingle bottom. Having wound up some keel we drifted in, only to pick up a broken mooring which necessitated a quick dropping of the anchor to avoid a collision in the tiny harbour. We spent a happy two hours talking to the local people before the wind made a 180° shift and we had to make a quick exit. With the wind blowing straight into the harbour our berth was untenable, so we sailed back to Kirkcaldy which we knew would be safe whatever wind shift we had. No sooner had we tied up than it started to rain.

Another windless morning: between 0615 and 1200 hrs. we alternately drifted and were towed by the skipper. The wind reached a gentle force 3 and we kept the spinnaker pulling all the way to Anstruther, only lowering it to enter the harbour. Here we visited the Scottish Fisheries Museum, an interesting and fairly new museum with many photographs and tableaux of life in the days of sail and the beginning of this century.

Yet another gale and heavy rain kept us in Anstruther for another night but during the intervening day we visited St. Andrews on our bikes. We got caught by the wind and rain on the return journey but it was worth the effort to see the old town with its university, castle and ruined cathedral. The gale proper (force 9) arrived during the night, and at high tide during the evening the waves were breaking right over the outer harbour wall.

With a good forecast we sailed northwards, leaving the decision about whether to go up the Tay or carry on northwards until we got to the mouth of the river. As the wind was favorable we carried on to Montrose. Here we ran into a difficulty, the wind was too strong for the Seagull to push against and we seemed to gain little ground with each tack. Eventually we had enough shelter to use the Seagull and we tied up alongside another yacht. Unfortunately the river water combined with the tide and swirled round the curve of the harbour just where we were moored! It reminded me of the river at Burnham on Crouch!

Our next port of call was Aberdeen, a most confusing port to enter as it appears that you can enter if the red lights are showing but not if the green are displayed! We tacked our way in as far as possible just behind a large ship, arguing that nothing would come out as long as it was going in. This worked for a while but eventually we met one coming out and had to use the Seagull to get into a corner out of his way. The harbour master hailed us and told us where to tie up but it cost us £12 for the night, and there were no facilities for yachts. Still, we did have a walk round the town before returning to the noisiest harbour I have ever been in. There were compressors working all night and a piledriver crashing at half hourly intervals until 2000hrs. The noise reverberated round the harbour sending the gulls into a vocal, wheeling, protesting frenzy each time, not to mention what it did to our nerves, until we realised the timing.

During our exit we met the P&O ferry and had to take refuge in a corner but after that we did manage to sail to the harbour mouth, turn to port, and with the spinnaker set, head for Peterhead. We had the usual fun of changing sails as the

wind varied between S1 and S5. We took the mainsail down in the harbour of refuge at Peterhead but even with the jib flapping, by the time we reached the far corner of the inner harbour we were still going too fast. With no room to come head to wind we came to a somewhat undignified stop alongside a fishing boat. Most of the fishing boats we saw this year had built up metal side decks, curved like the Atalanta, with only one entrance in the middle of the boat. This makes getting aboard with ropes a tricky business as there are no footholds other than the central gap. This one was no exception, but we managed without damaging either boat.

The harbour master appeared and told us where to go. As we had done in Aberdeen, we took many wrong turnings in the complicated and congested harbour before tying up alongside another yacht at a pontoon. Going in and out a second time proved much easier as we knew where we were going, the only hazard then being the fishing boats which we kept meeting at all the blind corners!

We spent three nights here with gales forecast on all but one of the weather forecasts. After this one we ventured out, hoping to reach Fraserburgh before the wind veered to NW and became a head wind. No sooner had we started to enjoy a run than the wind went through 180° and after tacking for an hour and making very little headway, we abandoned the exercise and returned to Peterhead, to hear another gale warning in the next forecast.

The following day was spent cleaning the boat, with yet another gale warning. We finally managed to leave the next morning at 0100hrs. when there was no moon nor any stars visible. It started to rain heavily at 0200hrs. and by 0400hrs. when we were off Fraserburgh, we were only too glad to go in and tie up alongside a fishing boat for a few hours sleep. The rain eased somewhat at 1000hrs. when we left, but returned with renewed vigour at intervals during the day. The wind was up to its old trick of blowing hard so that we reefed and changed jibs and then falling light so that we were barely making ½ knot. We spent the night at Buckie.

When the wind abated somewhat, we left the harbour but instead of dropping, it increased and we had a dead beat all the way to Lossiemouth. The ten miles took us 5½hrs. We managed to slip between the outer entrance walls and tied up alongside as it was impossible to negotiate the dog-leg into the harbour without an engine. For the first time this season the Seagull refused to run. The skipper was trying to persuade it to start when a fisherman came and told us that he needed the whole entrance to get out and would we move. He couldn't understand why we couldn't and ended by taking our bow-line from the quay and pulling us round the quay to the other side. With the wind blowing us hard into the quay wall, this proved a hair-raising business, with only two of us to fend off. The fisherman then tied our rope into a ring-bolt on the quay and disappeared, leaving us aground with the wind pushing us onto the ground and no way of getting onto the quay to set a stern rope or retrieve our bow-line! It is a good job the skipper is a rock climber and was able to scale the wall and eventually, with a new sparking plug, the Seagull decided to run and we were able to proceed into the harbour. We had just fixed all the lines when the harbour master came and told us where to moor, so once again we had to move.

At 0530 the next morning we left the harbour and had a pleasant reach for the first hour but then after a few exploratory tacks, we headed for the Cromarty coast, close hauled on the port tack. When we reached Belintor we changed tacks and sailed southwards past the beautiful scenery of the Black Isle and the Cromarty Firth. We had a good look at this because the wind died and after drifting we had to anchor just south of the entrance for a while: when the wind returned we were able to sail into the inner Firth and as it was getting dark, we anchored near Alturlie Point. We were interested to note how shallow the Firth is once you leave the channel. Wanting to anchor in about 15ft., we turned on the echo sounder to find a flat bottom at 13ft. right across the Firth!

At 0530 our position became untenable owing to the constant rolling so we sailed under Kessock Bridge (it was too dark for photography, but the skipper said that it was not in the same class as the Forth Railway Bridge anyway!). We continued into Inverness Harbour, and it was not until we were completely blanketed by the high quay walls that we had to resort to Seagull power.

Hot baths, not just showers, at the Inverness swimming pool were a welcome introduction to our stay here, whilst we waited for our youngest son to arrive with the car and trailer. Everyone was extremely friendly and helpful and an excellent slipway belonging to a boat-building firm made recovery an easy job despite the rain.

Our 20th sailing season in SEAMAJOR had ended.

For those interested in statistics, here are a few; we had sailed 595 miles in 154½ hours, an average of 4 knots 1% under motor, an all-time low. We never saw a single Atalanta either on the water or laid up. You may also be interested to know that we never used the Seagull outside a harbour and only inside one when we couldn't sail for some reason. The skipper prefers to row when the wind becomes too light to sail; he says it helps to pass the time and to give him some exercise!

We are already discussing where to go for our cruise next year, continuing to try to visit all the coasts of Western Europe under sail.

BR Lydon A89 (28)



Keyhaven – SHERPA being scrubbed off in the Slings



“BLUE GOOSE”
Fogbound – Rockland Harbour – Maine, USA