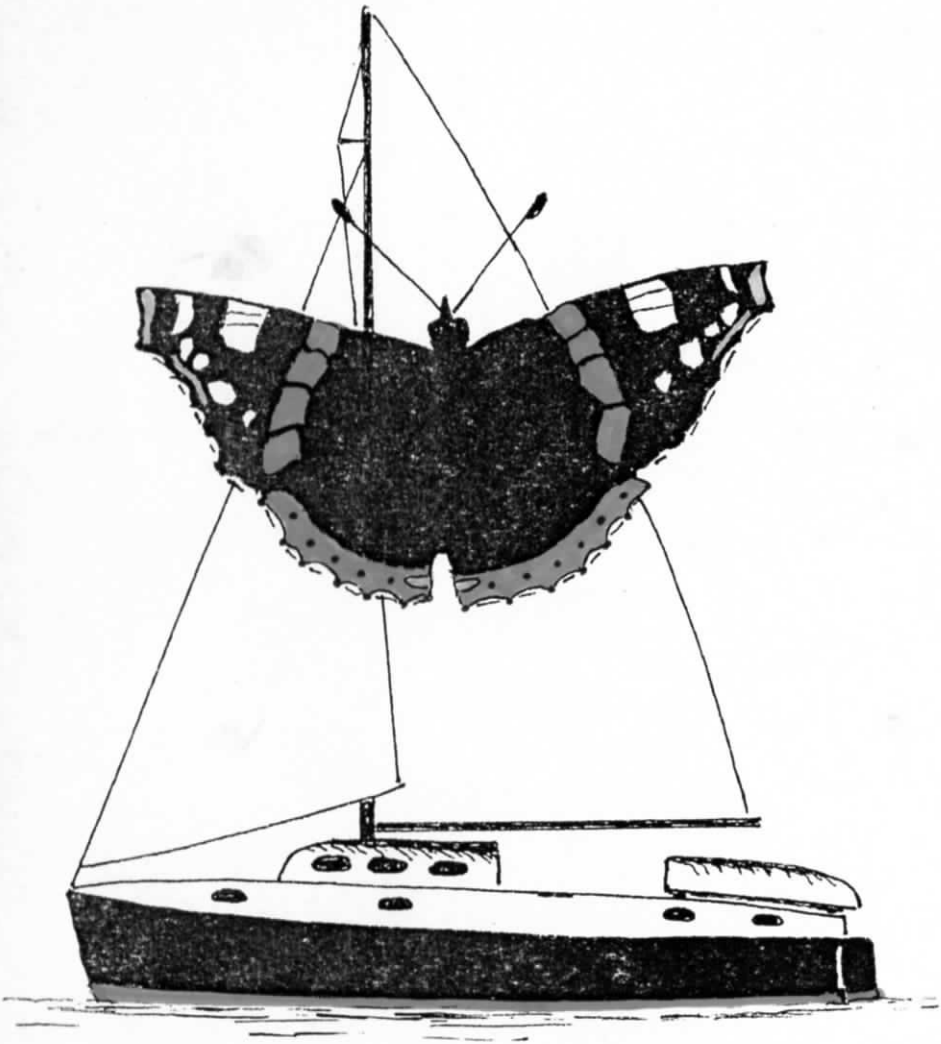
Atalanta

1994 - 1995



ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

36th Edition

1994-1995 BULLETIN INDEX

Frontispiece: Vanessa Atalanta - The Red Admiral

COMMODORE'S MESSAGE
Charles Currey

This year's get-together at Hereford was a great success as usual. We much enjoyed our stay at the College with its extensive back up - the evening party - comfortable accommodation - and the excellent breakfast. All thanks to Fred and Melva Boothman.

It was most satisfactory that so many were able to continue to Fred's farm to see his boatyard operations and to try their luck at the auction of marine bits and pieces; by no means all of them connected with Atalantas. Quite rewarding for some and that is both ways; please do not throw anything away. Someone will need it. Let us hope it can all happen again so that we can enjoy another Melva super lunch.

The interest in our vintage boats, all of them, continues to be very satisfactory. This is not really surprising as after all Atalanta's 26 was the first real "Trailer Sailer". A proper seagoing boat with enough accommodation, offshore capability, and still beachable. Tony Peck beached his boat in the Galapagos some twenty five years ago. All made possible by the hot moulded construction.

Now thanks to the increasing interest in classic boats, and to epoxy resin in all its forms applied by our family owners with such dedication, we can, most certainly, keep going for a long time to come.

The thanks of us all are due to Colin and Janet for all their hard and efficient work over the year. Bobbie and I look forward to seeing as many of you as can make it to the dinner on 7th January, during the Boat Show.

EDITORIAL

The inspiration for the frontispiece comes from Ronald Duncan's article "What's in a Name", in which he points out that the Latin name for the Red Admiral butterfly is "Vanessa Atalanta". Could this also inspire us to re-open the discussion about a pennant for the fleet?

Cyril Rees's letter about Moby Dick solves a mystery first noted in the 1991 Bulletin. It was in fact my son, Warden of Port Meadow in Oxford, who first told me that he thought there was a derelict Atalanta at the Medley Boat Station on his "patch". Now we know its history.

There are also articles in this issue in praise of the "Iron Topsail" and its many uses. If you want to keep yours in order consult Adrian Rivett.

And if you want advice about repairs to the woodwork you could do worse than to consult John Searle who owns A105 Taka Maru, A100 Jaunty, A172 Touch, F14 Noggin, F54 Bluebell and F47 Sherpa. Perhaps we should make him an Admiral of the Fleet.

And if I have forgotten anything I am no worse than the skipper who, all his life kept a small locked box which he consulted every day,

on board his boat. When he died the box was opened. Inside was a piece of paper on which was written: Port - left; Starboard - right.

THE ANNUAL ATALANTA RACE
West Mersea - 1994
By Simon Cooper AROSA (A104)

Saturday 13th August dawned fine and breezy - ideal racing weather! Disappointingly only two boats came to the starting line - Kookaburra (A168) and Arosa (A104). Of other would-be entrants, Bluster (A183) had been assaulted on her mooring by a rampant motor boat which seriously damaged her transom, and Hiran (A95) unable to leave her home port for West Mersea as 50% of her crew was prostrated with a bad back.

The wind was north-west force two to three. From the start line at the Nass Beacon the first leg was a reach to a mark off Shinglehead Point, then a run across the Blackwater to the south shore followed by a broad reach along the Bradwell shore and on to number six mark, a reach back to number two mark off Sales Point, then the only windward leg back towards West Mersea beach and finally a reach across the finishing line.

Arosa came in first with Kookaburra second, having suffered a fitting failure to the business end of the jib halyard which ended up at the top of the mast. The race took two and a quarter hours - in contrast to the seven and a half hours in 1993!

The early finish meant there was plenty of time for a leisurely lunch followed by the water sports (viewing, not participating). Arosa and Kookaburra moored up together which gave Arosa's crew the opportunity to study an original unmodified Atalanta - even down to the authentic Fairey-provided melamine crockery. It was sad that Norman Dorrington was without his brother who had died during the winter. The Dorrington brothers in Kookaburra have been staunch supporters of the annual Atalanta Race for many years, winning in 1983 and 1986. Norman was accompanied this year by his two sons.

Traditionally in the evening our patron General Odling and his wife have provided supper for the hungry hoards at Gun House, but it had been decided that they had done their bit magnificently and should now be relieved of this rather arduous act of hospitality. The new venue was the Willow Lodge Restaurant, conveniently on the waterfront, where it was good to meet the non-combatants, including General and Mrs Odling, the secretary Colin Twyford and Ted and Jane Stearn who had organised the event, and several others. Although lacking the atmosphere of the General's medieval barn, the Willow Lodge put on a very acceptable spread.

Next year, 1995, is the fortieth anniversary of the launching of Atalanta A1. How about aiming for a double figure entry in the Atalanta Race? The Blackwater-Stour-Orwell is a splendid cruising area: owners, why not make the Annual Race the focal point of the annual cruise?

THAMES RALLY 10/11 SEPTEMBER 1994
By Adrian Rivett AMBER ELLEN (A161)

The second weekend of September saw the Erith YC Open Weekend. We had arrived the Tuesday before, but due to rudder problems were not able to join in the race on the Saturday. The weather on the Saturday was bad, in so much that it was a grey dismal day, but good in terms of a decent bit of wind. On the first race I crewed for Colin on Hiran and in spite of a misunderstanding over the race start time, (we started 15 or 20 minutes late) gusted off round the course. On the first lap we found all the problems, the tide running fiercely at the buoy, just where the wind dies was just one example; the second time round all went well, with, it would seem, bits falling off the other boats, and we finished in third place on corrected time, two minutes behind the winner. Late Saturday saw us attempting to reassemble the rudder on Amber Ellen and to cut a long story short, by the following morning Amber Ellen was ready for action. The Sunday race had a good turnout of boats; in spite of a good start, the wind failed to materialise to the same extent as the day before, and we finished sixth.

It was a shame not to see more Atalanta owners, friends and boats. The venue at the Erith Y C is ideal as it offers uncrowded moorings enabling boats to be moored adjacent to each other, possibly even rafted up by the club ship. The club ship itself offers a cosy bar and accommodation if required, by arrangement.

I would be the first to agree that the 'slog' up the river is hard work, but the arrangement we had of arriving the week before and leaving the boat until the weekend of the Rally, worked well. With some co-ordinating there could be help with crews for boats and vice versa. If your boat is too far away, whether geographically or in its state of readiness, arrange to come along next year and enjoy a chat with others interested in Atalantas, many owners have done some demon tweaks and mods which prove to be very thought provoking. If you are in the process of doing substantial work to your boat, it is an ideal way to renew your enthusiasm and recharge the emotional batteries. Do not miss the opportunity!

Note from Colin Twyford, Hon Sec:

Janet and I raced Hiran on the Sunday, but with a social visit to the boat by some of my family, we had great difficulty in clearing the decks in time for the start and trailed the fleet by about half an hour; we had caught up to the back markers when we approached the buoy on the second circuit, but unfortunately the wind deserted us at the crucial moment and the flood (about three knots) swept us on to the mark, which is a large mooring buoy for the tankers; we struck heavily on the starboard quarter and I could see splintered laminates in the rear cabin, just above the bunk. We motored back to base, pulled out, repaired and re-launched a week later. The laminates on the outer skin were not

damaged at all, it was the curve of the hull which showed considerable strength.

MOBY DICK (A31/7)
A Letter to the Editor from Cyril D Rees

30th September 1994

Dear Major Roberts

Professor Parker, whom I contacted recently regarding the AOA tells me that you would be interested in hearing of the recent history of 'Moby Dick', the Atalanta 31 that you had observed in the meadow near Oxford.

The reason for it being at that particular location was as a consequence of hooligans. The then owner had sailed it from the south coast up the Thames and was contemplating mooring it permanently in that area. However, one day hooligans broke into the boat and effectively went joyriding; ultimately holing and sinking the craft. It was then raised, taken out of the water, engine and gear box removed and subsequently placed and left in the meadow open to the weather and unattended for two years.

The owner had become disheartened by the experience and no longer supported an interest in the craft. However, after the two years the Oxfordshire Council came to regard the boat as an eyesore and instructed him to remove it from the vicinity. With the aid of a friend he succeeded in having it transported to the Del Quay Boat Yard in West Sussex, near Chichester.

That was at the beginning of 1992. Moby Dick then remained in its gathering state of dilapidation and degeneracy until the June when my wife and I (at this time we had a boat and mooring in the Chichester Yacht Basin) taking a casual walk around the area came across it. We did know 'Atalanta' from the past. Our reaction was a kind of 'what a shame'! But we were at that time negotiating regarding the possible purchase of another boat on the IOW. Two weeks later that idea was dropped. Back to the Del Quay Boat Yard and an enquiry of the yard owner as to whether the Atalanta was for sale. He gave me the address and after contacting the owner its papers were duly transferred to us.

Having checked over the hull and topsides I was fairly certain there was no delamination. But ... in all other respects it was in a very sad state. Eighteen inches of rain water all through. Mixed with this was a possible tank full of diesel oil, small tree branches, inches of willow leaves and in any areas that were reasonalby sheltered from the elements were an assortment of birds' nests with the attendant mess. It took four solid weekends to clear out the mess. Now we could properly see what we had taken on!

Almost all the bilge boards, wash boards, shelves etc were affected by rot, beyond repair, missing or saturated with diesel oil. Deck fittings had gone. Engine compartment empty. No mast, boom, no anchor, chain,

warps etc, in fact it was but a shell.

Within this shell, eighteen inches aft of the peak bulkhead was a 10 inch hole in the centre of the deck from which was a duraluminium frame that followed the curves of the hull almost to the keel. The keel area had also been strengthened. I then learned that Moby Dick's rig had been changed to Junk rig.

Closer examination of the hull revealed the cause of its sinking. Under the locker cover of the starboard quarter berth a gouge of some fifteen inches by one and a half inches had been driven through the hull. As the hull was liberally plastered with mud it had not been apparent from the outside. When this was cleaned off a number of other minor scores were to be seen. These, I presumed were the result of driving the boat through shallow river water with a stony bed.

We are now two years on and hopefully are nearing the completion of the refit. Inevitably there were many trials and tribulations on the way. Apart from renewing much of the interior, rebuilding a section of the topsides right on the most severe part of the curve, where water had percolated through a solitary screw hole and rotted the full length of the stringer from the cockpit to the main bulkhead, and at least two layers of the laminates from inside out. There were also the rubbing strakes, cockpit combings, cockpit lockers, leaking seats, cockpit sole, windows and part of the transom that had to be renewed. At the moment we are reconditioning the keel jacks and renewing lifting plates. I suppose it speaks well of them that they have lasted 30 years and were still operable. At one point it appeared they had seized but a closer check revealed that the front end of the boxes were jammed with river mud that had set rock hard.

After we have finished with keels there is till the engine to couple up. The original engine was a Perkins 108. I did manage to trace it but it was still in a variety of pieces with many of the essential parts missing - including the gear box. There was no point in pursuing that, so I bought a secondhand BMC Captain 1500cc with the box and a matched propeller and installed that. I do think a 52 hp engine is rather large for an 8000lb sailing boat and probably accounted for it being used more as a motor boat in its later years. Then again try to imagine it under Junk rig weighing approximately 4 - 5 cwt sitting a mere 7ft from the bow. Maybe that was the more likely reason.

Another task still to be completed is the rigging of the mast. I did manage to trace both original mast and boom (unfortunately the sails seem to have disappeared). As regards the rigging, that had gone, and so I have no idea about what it should be in size, or the various lengths of the stays. Perhaps one of the members could help me with that.

There are a number of small jobs which all take time, but I think we have broken the back of the work and could have it back in the water by Christmas.

Well that is about it I guess. I hope I have not gone on too long.

Perhaps there are other things you would rather have had me comment on. But I thought I had better run this off as Prof Parker said you would want it before mid October. Being an appalling correspondent I had to get stuck in while the iron was still hot.

Yours sincerely
Cyril D Rees

WHAT'S IN A NAME?
By Ronald Duncan (A166)

A paragraph headed 'Red Admiral' in a recent edition of 'Classic Boat' brought to mind Atalantas. Now why should that be, you may enquire? Perhaps one of the vessels has been bought by a Russian Admiral? Not so, for the article concerned a new Corsican red wine bearing on its label a portrait of Nelson. It is called, importantly, 'The Admiral's Reserve'.

The opening words of the magazine article referred to butterflies haunting the buddleia in the author's boatyard; Orange Tips, the occasional Brimstone, an abundance of Red Admirals, but nowhere in the text was there reference to the latin name of the Red Admiral - 'Vanessa Atalanta'. Nor, it seems from our registration list are there any Atalantas in commission named 'Vanessa'. *(Ed: Correct)*

While musing on admirals, I was interested, as an inhabitant of northern latitudes, to find that the South of England is populated also by White Admiral butterflies; but that creature's name has no obvious nautical connection - 'Limenitis Camilla'. In contrast 'Essex Skipper' or 'Lulworth Skipper' and even 'Grizzled Skipper' can no doubt be seen resting on harbour walls occasionally, while the 'Dingy (not Dinghy) Skipper' no doubt sunbathes in more tropical climes. The 'Chequered Skipper' sounds as if he has jumped ship a few times and perhaps deserves being allocated 'a berth as wide as possible'; and sight of the 'Silver Spotted Skipper' might warrant the hoisting of a quarantine flag.

These nautical butterflies must have acquired their names somehow, but who first thought of 'Vanessa Atalanta' as a Red Admiral is not apparent, at least from my small Observer's Book. It seems to be a case of the more you learn the less you know. But maybe another member can tell us?

'Yachting Monthly' for January 1994 provided another random allusion. 'L'Atalanta stays on the Deben' ran the headline in the section of reports from 'Around the Coast'. Uffa Fox was only a few years old when this "lovely old ex Swedish Customs gaff cutter 'L'Atalanta' was built and named." "She has been sold," we are told, "by Robert Simper, and is to be restored by Frank Knight of Woodbridge."

One assumes that this elderly craft will not attract the usual bystanders' remarks: "It's one of those war-time airborne lifeboats, you know."

In contrast to these nautical associations (but hardly surprising considering the legendary celerity of Atalanta herself) one finds, in 'The Wonder Book of Motors', a sepia photograph of a Bugatti with an Atalanta coupé body. This sleek piebald machine with large tear-drop wings and side louvres along the bonnet, has a cream panel which sweeps across the bonnet and down the door in a sinuous curve, which complements the mudguards. The streamlined cockpit blister forms a domed roof and curved windows which sylishly combine with a panache that perhaps only this Italian master of design could have conceived. Certainly, it is a worthy specimen to associate with the grace and speed of Atalanta herself.

However, being Northumbrian, one may be forgiven for saving until last a few lines from the chorus of 'Atalanta in Calydon', by Algernon Charles Swinburne, who so loved the landscape of Northumberland, though nightingales rarely travel so far north.

"When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamour of waters, and with might ..."

and so on ...

I leave members to reach for their own volumes to read the rest of the poem and, indeed, to search for other allusions to our 'maiden most perfect'.

Meanwhile do not those opening words of Swinburne - "When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces," remind you that, if the annual dinner comes, can fitting out be far behind?

MEDITERRANEAN MEMORIES
By R B Upton, COLCHIDE (A89)

Summer holiday, July 1970s, A89; Piccolo Porto di Formie, Italy. Barometer 77.6 (good), wind NW, sea calm. Local time radio frequency 1545. At 1140 A89 slipped out of the Piccolo Porto into Gaeta Bay.

We consisted of Christian, 15 year old nephew, myself and black labrador Kim bound for the island of Ponza 60 km from Formia to the SW and W by N of Naples. We were motoring across the bay of Gaeta when the Ford 'E' stalled, caused by an air lock in the supply tube. This

was a frequent happening with the Ford and one of the reasons for changing our engine in later years. We re-started and sailed on passing Gaeta point at 1230, when we streamed the log.

The wind tended to head the boat but we were able to make a course of 196 against a long swell which comes up from the Straits of Gibraltar after SW storms. In the Med the wind comes ahead when you put up the sails and motor sailers with good engines are popular.

After a couple of hours the land dropped out of sight and we were making some progress, when suddenly the engine again stalled. Astern we were trailing along piece of plastic sheeting entwined in our propeller. Christian went overboard and cut the material free in a few minutes, and returning to the after deck he surveyed the scene around, with plastic floating away and A89 rising and descending on the swell.

At the highest point of our movement he saw a black object on the sea about one km distant. The engine was re-started, and we moved towards it; the object was also moving in our direction and took the form of a rubber dinghy, propelled by an outboard, containing five persons.

Alongside, the Zodiac contained: a man, a woman, three boys and a large amount of Luis Vuitton suitcases. Almost before securing the children were on board and romping around with Kim; father followed, and we hauled Madame aboard last. The luggage had to be carefully handled - all the while the movement on the swell made for plenty of confusion. The survivors and luggage were strewn about and there was pandemonium, the children tusselling with each other and Kim barking.

I ordered the children fiercely into the after cabin, and the parents forward, distributing the luggage and obtaining an equilibrium for the boat. The Zodiac was then attached astern and we made our way under power and sail back to Gaeta.

Arriving eventually in the Bay of Gaeta it was decided that Christian and the Zodiac owner should go ahead to the Piccolo Porto in order to warn my wife of our return and prevent her from taking the ferry boat to Ponza to meet us as planned.

I suspected that the owner had his own reasons for wanting to return quickly, so I warned him that by law we must together visit the Port Captain's office and make a signed statement; we had a British registration and the incident was outside the then territorial limits. We presented ourselves to the Port Captain whose office was in a fine old port fortification, probably mediaeval, and the owner told his story, duly recorded on a typewriter.

He had purchased a Christcraft and for the summer holiday intending to take his family from Anzio to Ischia. During the crossing at some spot near to Gaeta, with everyone on deck the boat sustained a sudden shock. His wife descended into the cabin and saw the sole covered with water and rising. They forthwith inflated the Zodiac and loaded it with their luggage and children, then set off quickly from the sinking vessel.

After some time they saw a sail 'A89' and fired a parachute flare (we did not see it in the bright sun). The owner's story finished, I related how we picked up the survivors and returned to Gaeta. We each signed the typed document, thanked the Captain, all shook hands and each departed his own way.

At this epoch we were living 20kms south of Rome at Castel di Decima on the route to Anzio. My wife was working in Rome but one morning missed her bus and thumbed a lift from a motorist. Italian motorists always stop to help a lone woman who needs a lift. She was surprised to see that the driver was none other that the owner, a certain Rudolf Valentino, husband of Luciana, with sons Giuseppe, Pino and Roberto. He told my wife that he purchased the Christcraft (on credit?) and somehow it sprang a leak, but they had everything insured and the company had paid the claim.

However, the day after the shipwreck, a fishing trawler out of Naples had found a motor boat floating empty and unharmed, and so towed her into Naples. Later on Rudolf sent us the Verey pistol plus one cartridge with a kind letter.

We eventually reached Ponza and enjoyed a wonderful holiday - the sort of holiday families remember for ever.

(Editor's Note: The story was related in detail in a local newspaper under the headline: "Motoscafo affonda: salvo l'equipaggio.")

AMBER ELLEN (A161) SUMMER 1994
By Adrian Rivett

Having just put the finishing touches to the engine/propeller survey (which I hope some owners are returning to me), I came to wondering about motor-sailing. In an earlier survey, it seems that few people motor-sail and I must say that in the first instance I would have thought one either sails or motors ... however, experience gained during 1993 and 1994 has caused me to re-examine my views.

The first experience with our Atalanta - Amber Ellen - was last year, after the West Mersea Regatta. We decided to investigate the Walton Backwaters. When just past Clacton we started losing the best tide, and the wind was on the nose! It was blowing a good 18 knots and the boat was doing well at four to five knots, over on her ear, but comfortable. Our son insisted that we should run the engine to speed up the process (he would be happier on a Riva 50'), so we explained that the engine would make little difference, but to please him I started it, and we gained a knot in speed and made significantly better heading! This was reaffirmed later that year, when returning from Calais with the wind on the nose and a deadline to make at North Foreland! R:unning the engine enabled us to maintain a good five knots and reduce leeway considerably.

This summer we took Amber Ellen from the Medway down to

Poole, stopping off at Eastbourne, Christchurch and Newtown on route. NE winds made for a good passage only adding a little "top-up" from the engine to charge the batteries! Our new tri-radial fractional spinnaker transformed off-wind sailing. Note "off" wind, not just "down" wind! We had tried reaching with our old spinnaker, but this new one was a vast improvement and is now our most used sail. We have found that the boat will sail very well with the wind just before the beam, so when beam reaching with space, up goes the spinnaker, and once trimmed with a steady breeze, the sail will respond to about five degrees either way making holding a course easy. Distance covered: 95 miles; time: 21 hours.

Towards the end of August we went across to Cherbourg with not quite enough wind for our spinnaker. We left Poole at 7.20 am and had a bright, sunny and uneventful crossing. Off Cherbourg we passed close to an Italian square rigger which looked beautiful in the setting sunlight. We made the final approach under power and tried our old Seafarer autohelm since the crew were fishing and bored with helming! It worked wonderfully in these calm conditions, taking us inside the "Grande Rade" at around 2300 with hands to spare! Distance logged: 70 miles; time: 16 hours.

Our plan had been to visit Rouen and hop back along the Normandy coast to Calais. However, we dallied in Cherbourg, thoroughly enjoying its French-ness and all the admiring visitors to Amber Ellen. We sneaked into the berth closest to the harbour wall attracting lots of attention from passers-by, and making sorties into the town easy.

Three days later we headed eastwards, but managed to get thoroughly muddled between GMT, BST and French time! So, we were a bit late leaving Cherbourg - at 9.30 BST - than good passage planning would recommend! We were ploughing along at about seven knots with full main and spinnaker in about a 17 to 18 knot wind when we were caught up by some "bad" weather! Wind increased to a steady 24 knots, gusting 27 to 28! We "squeezed" the spinnaker and started the engine. Amber Ellen continued to plough on at seven to eight knots. We found ourselves rounding Barfleur against four knots of tide - three knots over the ground, situation normal! When the squall passed we released the spinnaker and still made good headway against those powerful tides. Sea conditions were choppy, but with the engine running, the occasional huge wave hardly slowed the boat! We passed by Barfleur and hurtled southwards to St Vaast, entering the bay at around 1630, 45 minutes before low water. There was hardly any water in the bay, but we sneaked in and parked Amber Ellen on the beach, went mussel collecting, and strolled ashore for coffee, and waited for the tide. We eventually plonked into a comfortable berth at 10.00 pm and went in search of dinner. Distance logged: 35 miles; time: 7.5 hours.

At this point we realised that we were going the wrong way along the French coast - leaving at high water for the tide to get us out of small harbours, but arriving at low water - but that is life, and we just never

seemed able to avoid it.

When we left St Vaast a couple of days and a couple of dozen oysters later, there was over 20 knots of westerly wind going our way!. We spent the whole day sailing downwind with full main and spinnaker, and a substantial following sea which was going just that bit faster than we were. As the stern of the Atalanta lifted on the waves, the water speed across the rudder rapidly decreased, reducing "feel" on the helm, but as the boat picked up speed and surfed down the waves, normal helm was resumed. Again the engine came in useful to supplement steering confidence in this situation. That little extra "push" from the engine kept the steering very positive so again the autohelm could be left to get on with direction, leaving crew free to fiddle with ropes, make tea and enjoy the scenery.

Whilst our general direction was towards Courseuilles Sur Mer, we dipped south to get a closer look at Arromanches, requiring us to gybe a couple of times in very lumpy sea, but again the engine helped keep the whole business under control and comfortable. Unfortunately the tide was all wrong at Courseuilles so we reluctantly carried on to Trouville. Our approach was made on a very dark night, after 2200. It was really traumatic, approaching a strange lee shore, unable to draw any correspondence between our charts and what we actually could see amongst the lights of this busy seaside town. As we came close enough to try to see where we were heading we could hear the sea pounding on the shore and had visions of Amber Ellen pounding too! We approached and retired twice before we spotted another bigger yacht approaching with much more confidence. We followed gingerly until it suddenly disappeared! But then we spotted its masthead light above the breakwater and aimed for where we had last seen the rest of the boat! Yes, it was an entrance and we turned a corner into a quiet haven with very little water and heaved a huge sigh of relief. At last we ditched the sails and were locked in just before midnight. Amazingly we touched bottom inside the little outer harbour, even though we had just followed in a 34' ketch, and within minutes were followed by a 35' Feeling. We wondered again at the joys of those who sail into harbours they know! Distance logged: 67 miles; time: 13.5: hours.

Two days later, having explored Trouville and Deauville in the rain, we abandoned our ideas of a visit to Rouen and headed across the Baie de Seine for Fecamp. We left Trouville in terrible rain, huge seas and westerly at that! Because of the inclement weather we ran the reassuring engine. As we crossed the Baie, three powerful tugs ploughed out of Le Havre - seemingly towards us, but turning towards Antifer before actually colliding! When we caught them up about an hour later we had the pleasure of watching them at work in heavy seas. They were engaged in helping a huge tanker manoeuvring into the terminal with some difficulty. The rain eased and we had a bit of sunshine for the next leg to Fecamp, when we bore away slightly and eventually got the

spinnaker up in a good 20 knots of wind. We continued to run the engine for much of the time, which proved useful when the spinnaker halyard stopper gave out, depositing spinnaker and squeezer in the water. Engine power enabled us to hold our course whilst all the bits were recovered, and it felt good to have it when we finally powered into the tiny entrance at Fecamp with a lumpy swell behind us. Distance logged: 35 miles; time: 6.5 hours.

Later the following day we headed off to Dieppe. It was downwind sailing all the way until we turned for our approach. We needed a quick reef when we turned onto a beam reach making us realise how hard our spinnaker works with relative comfort. Again the engine helped us in to yet another new harbour in the dead of night. We rafted up against a friendly looking Dutchman who was happy enough for us to clamber over his boat for a look around Dieppe and to get some good shots of our 11 year old up the mast, putting the spinnaker halyard back where it belonged! Distance logged: 35 miles; time: 6 hours.

From Dieppe we sailed up to the Baie de Somme. As usual we got there later than wise and entered this huge shallow bay against the falling tide, with those powerful westerlies working against the tide to produce very short, lumpy seas pushing us inshore at a fair old rate. The channel to St Valery is narrow and very well buoyed, but bends frequently and sharply, requiring us to gybe about eight times in the outer channel - often feeling like we were going up the beach before rounding the next buoy! Again the engine thudded below our feet reassuringly. Once well into the wide estuary the rough seas disappeared along with the wind, and we nudged our way against the tide, eventually motoring gracefully up to the lovely marina at the end of the town. Remarkably, our wind indicator took a rest that night and the marina waters were like glass. Distance logged: 33 miles; time: 6.5 hours.

We left the following afternoon after two good meals and too much champagne! Again the 11 year old came in useful, since Susan was laid low in her bunk. For the first time during the trip the wind was not with us. We motored most of the way to Boulogne enjoying the brilliance of clear skies and arriving at the next highwater, to find a steady flow of fishing boats leading the way into the enormous outer harbour, bouncing us all over the place in the process. But our engine kept us well under control and we found a berth for the night at around 3.00 am. It was a rocky night with the Sea-cat setting the whole pontoon in motion with its phenomenal wash! Distance logged: 44 miles; time: 2 hours.

Susan headed back to Folkestone early the next day, leaving Karl and I to find our way to Calais. The short hop to Calais was hard work - it was very rough off Cap Gris Nez and I felt committed to helming, so Karl navigated and kept the log. The final approach to Calais felt like Piccadilly Circus with two ferries arriving at the same time as we did, requiring us to gybe at the harbour entrance to turn right to the marina. Distance logged: 26 miles; time: 4 hours.

Susan brought our extra crew across with her on her next day off, so we hopped up to Dunkerque which was disappointing - but then you do not know until you try. We needed to reverse into our berth at the marina, as they could not make up their minds where to put us until the last minute. Distance logged: 22 miles; time: 4 hours.

And finally the long haul home to meet up with Colin and Co at Erith - ready for the following week-ends' racing. We left Dunkerque at 1015 and finally chugged to our rest in Erith at midday the following day. The crossing was hard work - heading around 290/310 agains NW winds. Still we had certainly had our share of "favourable" winds and completed our longest passage yet! Distance logged: 105.86 miles; time: 26 hours. Phew!

NORTH SEA ADVENTURE IN BABY SEAL A137
By Michael Thorley

Peter's ambition this year was to do some serious sailing on the Ijsselmeer. The plan was to cross the North Sea from Harwich via Noord Hinder North (NHR-N) buoy and on to Ijmuiden. From there a short trip along the Noordzeekanal would see us into the southern part of Ijsselmeer (Markenmeer) just beyond Amsterdam, and the world would be our oyster! This strategy would give us a good shaking down sail to begin with and avoid most of the off shore hazards to be found further south in the Thames Estuary. It would also give us the shortest crossing of the busy shipping routes at the north end of the traffic separation zones on the other side. Moreover it would be economical with time, in contrast with other passage options, thereby releasing more time for extensive relaxed sailing in Holland.

The restraints were the dates available to Peter - he had to set off as soon as possible after the end of the academic year in Leeds and be back again for the beginning of the next - availability of crew (at least for the the North Sea crossings) and, last but not least, the "weather permitting factor".

The crew was David Allen (A66 Roamara), experienced East coast sailor with several North Sea crossings under his belt, and myself (A141 Rakia) - armchair sailor, no North Sea crossings, relatively inexperienced but not too bad on theory and willing to learn.

On arrival at Amsterdam we would be joined by Janice, whose circumspection regarding small boat passages is almost prophetic and therefore to be admired, whilst David would return home by the same means as Janice had arrived - the ferry - to begin his family sailing holiday.

At 1315 hrs on Sunday 7th August, Peter and David reversed Baby Seal out of her crowded berth at high water against a brisk north easterly wind and we left Heybridge Basin just ahead of the receding tide. The bright afternoon was pleasant enough with new sights for me - local

knowledge to be soaked up by one of the latest "foreigners" to take up residence in E Mersea and not to be spoilt by the pronounced chop thrown up by the wind against ebb tide in the Blackwater.

As the river widened the views became more distant, clouds covered the sun and the chop became very pronounced at the Eagle. Time to cover up spray dampened feet and clothes with waterproofs. Hot soup and sandwiches prepared by Janice and my wife Sarah revived spirits. Off Clacton we tacked our way, motor sailing, into the Medusa Channel, and deciding that enough was enough, entered Harwich Harbour in darkness against the blaze of Felixtowe's lights. At "only" 12 hours and 15 minutes after departing Heybridge, our little diesel engine was switched off and we picked up a buoy for the night just beyond Levington Marina. Apart from a leaky U bolt, all was well.

The intention had been to set off again at 1400 hrs on Monday but the engine would not start. Peter cleared a blocked fuel filter and we dropped our mooring at 1500 hours, taking the ebb out of Harwich on a bright afternoon. The weather forecast was not unfavourable; wind force three to four but from the NE. I had taken Dramamine tablets and continued to do so every eight hours, since on two previous ooccasions I had been incapacitated with sea sickness.

Some time later, under full mainsail and genoa equivalent (roller reefing foresail) and against a force four NE wind, we encountered the rolling Grounds, another "first" for me. At this stage with Baby Seal well heeled over, I began to have doubts about the wisdom of small boat sailing and sought assurance; David informed me that sometimes it was like this all the way across - hardly encouraging! Peter was resting and the ship's log records that the water was "very turbulent".

By 1730 hours we were heading north at 5.2 knots over the ground according to the Decca. We had tea and biscuits, reduced the foresail, streamed the log over the Port quarter, altered course to avoid a steamer that was not going to avoid us, refuelled the tank and logged out with Thames coastguard off the N Shipwash buoy at 1900 hours. The spring tide had turned foul (S) and the combination of foul tide and NE wind made any eastward progress impossible. An attempt to break away from this effect off Orford by sailing on the port tack was foiled by our being set too close to the Inner Gabbard.

At 0115 hours the engine faltered and the full genoa was re-set. At 0200 hours the engine stopped, but we had finally escaped the Orford light and sailed on, making reasonable progress against a NE force four to five wind.

Peter changed the fuel filters when daylight came, an arduous undertaking crouched over a smelly engine in a seaway. Progress eastwards was once again halted around 0720 hours by the tide, and by 1200 hours we had sailed only two miles north with no easterly progress at all.

By 1230 hours the sea state was definitely rough. David deftly

caught the after cabin door, life ring attached, as it made a bid for freedom from its perch in the inflatable dinghy lashed on the after deck.

The next weather forecast was for a full gale, and precautions against accident were now imperative; there would be little chance of recovering anyone from the sea. The skipper insisted that harness be worn and clipped on at all times. All aboard were issued with a personal strobe light "just in case". A further concession to safety, instituted at the outset was to mop up diesel oil which converts a wet surface into a skating rink. A drop of washing up liquid and a paper towel does the trick.

Twenty four hours out of Harwich our spirits were flagging and the unpleasant conditions we were experiencing now were plainly going to deteriorate much further. We were still to the west of the NHR-N buoy, an estimated 80 miles from Ijmuiden and within a few hours of the tide setting south once again. Then strong winds, and darkness.

Our situation had to be reappraised: Hook Van Holland was 15 miles nearer as the crow flies, a considerable saving in time and discomfort at our present rate of progress, and we would not be fighting the tide. Against this was the fact that we would need a great deal of luck (or Divine intervention) to lay the course with the wind a strong north easterly. We risked being swept down the coast past the Hook - to where?

An animated discussion ensued and Peter was persuaded, maybe not against his will, to accept David's contention that it should be possible to lay the Hook with the engine helping us to point higher. The decision was taken to go to NHR-N as originally planned so that we could cross the Traffic Separation Zone properly at right angles and then head for Hook Van Holland.

First, sail had to be reduced as Baby Seal was overcanvassed for the conditions. Her angle of heel in the blustery conditions made roller reefing very arduous, slow and dangerous. Peter cautiously manoeuvred himself to the weather side of the mast and secured himself on a short line. From there he managed the topping lift, the main halyard and the boom-rolling ratchet, whilst hanging on at the same time. The crew, secured in the cockpit, steadied the boom and helped to roll the mainsail as neatly as possible, struggling with their balance and the boom claw.

The tighter the twin mainsheets are, the less easy it is to roll the sail past the boom, but on slackening the mainsheets the boom rises and swings about. Nevertheless a full reef was put in and the twin sheets adjusted; a better arrangement than on my own boat which has a single mainsheet on the traveller spanning the entrance to the after cabin. We were very grateful for the jib roller reefing. No more perilous trips along a pitching deck, or deluges of seawater down the forehatch. We slacked off the sheet, pulled on the line and the foresail was reduced to working jib size. The engine was started up, and the next phase of our adventure began.

It will be noted at this stage that little reference has been made to our dietary intake, and the log hardly mentions it, or anything else for that matter, barring navigational data. Nevertheless Baby Seal did carry food and drink, perhaps even to excess, but eating was not foremost in our minds.

Sarah's sandwiches had been eaten, and the remnants of Janice's excellent soup grew something rather unpleasant and had to be consigned to the deep. However David and I, before leaving Harwich, had prepared a mass of bread roll sandwiches with curried pilchard fillings. Peter ensured that we ate something at appropriate intervals, at least during the first part of our journey, and if anything needed to be done in the galley, it was Peter who elected to go below.

That is not to say that David or I did not make a cup of tea occasionally, and at various times we even had milk and cereals and Sarah's home-made muesli and biscuits. Boiled sweets relieved drying mouths (mine only?) now and again, and I, for one, found Spa mineral water a good beverage to sip.

As the sea state deteriorated, the consumption of formal meals withered. The thought of pilchard rolls repelled, yet they were still there, did not need any preparation and should have fulfilled energy requirements. But at this juncture not a morale booster, more like a mortification of the flesh.

The skipper suggested that we might like to rest. David declined, but I accepted with alacrity. There was little else to do except hang on, watch the waves, hope or pray depending on one's inclinations, and for me to ponder on the prudence of such a crossing, knowing that only a hundred miles away was a wife and young family of whom I was very fond, a newly acquired and comfortable house, beloved possessions and junk that would one day, with luck, come in useful ...

Also, when on watch, it seemed that since steering was more than ably catered for by the autopilot, then sailing boiled down to keeping a lookout, checking sails and equipment, and navigation. And the latter had, from the beginning been Peter's exclusive province.

Anyway, prior to resting I braved half a pilchard sandwich with about as much enthusiasm as one receives pre-medication before surgery - resigned compliance - and descended into the gloom of the pitching forecabin to divest myself of safety harness, waterproofs and boots etc. Something told me that all was not well, so, hurriedly stepping back into the boots, I rushed back into the cockpit to the weather rail and leaned over. They say it should be the lee rail, but academic considerations apart, one serves as well as the other and the weather rail was safer and quicker. The sea accepted that which the stomach rejected and, after a sip of mineral water the world and forecabin were much brighter, and the sickness was not repeated.

Rest on Baby Seal is a comparative state; one is out of the weather and hubbub of the cockpit, but into another world of chaos. I feel that I

got my fair share, and more, of rest, and on this crossing did not feel at all exhausted, so presumbaly I slept. The log seems to corroborate this, for in between Peter's navigational jottings, he notes that 'Michael sleeps' or 'Michael sleeps on'...

Little by little we progressed over the North Sea, which I have been told retrospectively by one who knows can be very dark, gloomy and forbidding. I was already getting that impression. The log book reads on: 1715 hrs. 52°12'N 2°59'E, Heading 78° T. Tide foul setting S. 1815 hrs. 52°10'N 3°07'E. 4.6 Kn Heading 96° T. Forecast 6 but wind measuring 6 gusting 7; 2045 hrs 52°07'N 3°23'E 4.8 Kn, Heading 130° T. Main rolled to 3 reefs and jib rolled to storm size at about this time. 2130 hrs sea rough. An understatement; the sea was spectacular - what we could see of it in the pitch dark and pouring rain.

By the light of deck mounted Nav lights we witnessed continuous curtains of water with pronounced phosphorescence cascading from the jib and main. Protocol went by the board and we switched on the masthead Nav lights as well as the deck mounted and steaming lights. Not that it made any difference for, at a later hour when crossing the Traffic Separation Zone, brightly lit ferries and super tankers were seen to appear suddenly and disappear immediately behind the huge swell. There would be no future for a person going overboard. He would be lost to view immediately. The Decca has a man-overboard function and records exact position, distance, and bearing. Fortunately we had no need to use it. I now feel that if we had used it under those conditions, barring a miracle, the attempt would have been doomed to failure and would have put at risk the remaining crew and the boat itself.

Poor Baby Seal took a battering on the port side forward of the cockpit. She rose to most of the waves, but caught a fair number breaking over the deck and cockpit. By kneeling in the cockpit I was able to pump the engine bilge frequently, at the same time soaking up the welcome heat rising from the engine and avoiding all but the worst of the waves. Those that did come aboard were impressively weighty as they landed on your back. The water was quite warm - 17° in fact, but probably only felt warm because you were so chilled by the wind.

We were all utterly soaked except for our feet, but not too cold excepting David, who was less heavily clad than Peter or myself. I found that my saturated fleece lined nylon helmet with ear muffs was far warmer that a wet Sou'wester, and that woollen gloves, although wet, worn beneath windproof nylon gauntlets kept my hands warm.

An even better source of warmth was to be found in Baby Seal's forecabin, for under the step of the main bulkhead is a small Calor gas heater. With some difficulty and impatience this was coaxed into life; and what a wonderful effect it had on us. The cabin temperature rose immediately, and the radiant heat brought life back to cold hands and legs.

Apart from this, things down below were pretty chaotic - nearing 'entropy', a term remembered from days as a student of physical

chemistry, being 'a state of maxiumum disorderliness'. With great foresight Peter had provided the galley and forecabin with a liberal number of grab handles, and only with their help could one move around safely. That is, provided one was holding on. I was stunned by one before I could get my hand to it, and the tenderness persisted for about a fortnight.

The stove was swinging wildly on its gimbals, the dampers being unable to control its wild career. The end of each swing was marked by an appalling crash. Nothing would stay put on it, and boiling a kettle was quite out of the question. Both clean and used pans and crockery were flying everywhere, irrespective of where they were re-stowed. Food was better packed (Janice's hand?) and stayed put. Movable navigational equipment, the chart, log, plotter, books, all descended to mingle with culinary gear, water and feet.

Luckily Peter's store of bananas - essential breakfast food - remained blissfully unaware of the general free for all. The state of the log book and chart ably testified to the water in the galley/Nav area. The lack of detail, most noticeable in the coastal areas of Stanford's Southern North Sea all weather chart which we were using, was more than compensated for by its ability to withstand the grime and constant deluge of water it encountered, which the Admiralty charts could never have done. After a perfunctory wipe with a paper towel, and maybe even before that, it readily accepted pencil writing without damage, and could be cleaned off with an eraser afterwards in preparation for its next use.

Water in the boat came from four sources. Rainwater blown through the open doorway was an irritating but minor source. When Baby Seal is sailed at an appreciable angle of heel, as on this journey, a constant flow of water enters the bilges and floor of the galley via the sliding plastic (keel) jack box front covers. This problem is common to (some) other Atalantas and is accentuated by the pumping action encountered even in a moderately choppy seaway. On A141 Rakia, and I believe on some other boats, this has been solved by permanently sealing the slides with silicone sealant.

Another source was intermittent, unexpected, and very dramatic, especially for anyone caught without headgear and with arms raised to hold grab handles. Solid water breaking over the hatchway as it frequently did at one stage, enters via the part open hatch but is also forced under the front end and sides of the hatch, be it open or closed, spraying all over the place.

Unlike the cockpit, which instantaneously and miraculously rids itself of green water via the self drainers, water in the galley and forecabin had to be dealt with by hand. Much could be bailed with improvised "gentlemen's jugs" made from cut down one litre plastic soft drink bottles, the rest being mopped up with a sponge.

The forecabin took in water from the forehatch which leaked like a sieve despite being wadded with towelling before leaving Harwich, and also from two hawse pipes forward which had been wadded around the

anchor chains.

The forecabin's chaos was less than the galley's but more insidious. The heaving of the boat and wet floor had to be contended with whilst getting one's wet weather gear off - or not - as later on when outside conditions were at their worst. Then I merely spread out my old woollen blanket and rested on it fully kitted out, after clearing the bunk of unwanted gear.

The noise below was appalling, although barely noticeable from the cockpit. The stove crashed to and fro in tune with Baby Seal's slamming, and as one lay horizontally the normal wave and wind noises were periodically replaced by a sensation of hovering, a pause like suspended animation.

One knew what was coming next; rapid descent terminated by an almightly bang as though falling onto concrete, then forward progress again. It is amazing that sleep really was possible at all.

Two hours after our change of course at NHR-N it was plain that we were not going to be able to lay a course for Hook Van Holland as Peter had earlier feared. At 0200 hours on Wednesday 10th August, with David on the helm and Peter resting, the log reads, "boat slamming very badly, big swell and two metre waves".

We thought it to be a full gale and roused Peter, who, pausing to don oilskins, boots, harness and lifejacket, light his pipe and contemplate, emerged into the cockpit oozing quiet confidence.

With Peter against the mast, the mainsail was dropped completely, hurriedly gathered in and secured as best we could - there was no possibility of rolling it up - and the engine switched off. The transformation in Baby Seal's motion was remarkable. She rose to the waves once again, floating more or less upright rather than trying to plough through, with slamming much reduced.

The weather continued and we were very glad to be in a centre cockpit boat, seated where the motion was minimal; even the pilchard sandwiches began to appeal and were consumed without ill effect!

At 0400 the log reads "52°01'N 3°29'E. Crossing shipping lane, engine off. Continued pumping bilge and bailing galley and forecabin. Wind and waves abating. Still big swell".

An evil looking yellowish-red dawn arrived under a black layer of cloud and we passed close to a pilot boat on station. By 0900 hours wind and sea were moderate close to the Adriana wreck buoy, about eight miles WSW of the Hook. Sails had been re-set and we motor sailed slowly against very light airs and the tide, to report to Entrance Control on VHF Channel 3 at the MV West Cardinal buoy.

Two hours later, at 1300 hours and in brilliant sunshine, we received permission to enter the MAAS, and continued on our way up the busy Niewe Waterweg to the working town of Maasslius, where we berthed alongside the wooden piles of the canal wall, between the sluice gate in the sea wall and the railway bridge, in the late afternoon.

(The story does not end here, but you will have to wait till 1995 to hear what happened next! Ed)

THE ANCIENT MARINER'S RETURN

By Barnabus Brown, late bo'sun of His Majesty's Sloop 'Marauder'
(As related by the scribe Simon Cooper)

It was in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and five that I was laid to rest in a grassy churchyard overlooking the River Dart in my home town of Dartmouth where I retired after many years in the service of His Majesty's Navy. For two hundred years I had slumbered peacefully, when I was awakened - I know not why - with a great desire to revisit the scenes of my previous existence. I made my way down to the quay noticing many changes on the way. My cottage was no more, a fine park was in its place. But the most extreme change was to the carriages - not only had they multiplied considerably but they appeared to propel themselves at incredible speed without the assistance of horses. I learnt later that they were driven by engines: in my former life I had always been interested in matters of science and I remember a shipmate from Cornwall telling me about the new pumping engines which were then beginning to be used for the mines. Those engines were housed in buildings as high as a church and turned only two or three times a minute, those used in these horseless carriages fitted into a space the size of a small locker and turned thousands of times a minute. I was soon to find that almost every ship and boat also had an engine which propelled the vessel by turning a screw in the water set in the stern of the boat (although I noticed that the Upper Ferry, which in my day was rowed by two men, was now driven by two enormous wheels, one on either side, very similar to watermill wheels).

I stopped a man and asked what was the day, the month and the year. He looked a little surprised, but told me that it was the 24th day of May, nineteen hundred and ninety-three.

I found my way down to the quay and gazed out over the anchorage which presented a very different view to that of my day. Instead of the lofty masts and yards, all the larger boats appeared to be driven solely by engines. Many of the smaller boats had masts but these craft were for people's pleasure; they were not working boats, being known as yachts.

Moored to the quay making ready to depart was a trim yacht about 26 feet in length with a single mast and rigged fore and aft with what we used to call a 'leg o' mutton sail', named "Arosa". Her crew told me that she was a class of yacht named "Atalanta". It transpired that "Arosa" was about to depart for a cruise to France and I was invited to come along. I instantly accepted as I was keen to visit scenes of the most exciting events of my former life and to set foot in a country whose distant shore I spent so many hours studying but on which I had never been able to set foot during the long years of war. Before we left I witnessed two more

engineering marvels: into the harbour swept an iron warship which was able to travel under the water and so remain undetected. I was told that such a vessel, which is called a submarine, had travelled right around the world under the water. The second marvel was a flying machine which passed overhead at a prodigious speed. In my previous life I had seen models of birds made from wood and parchment which would glide through the air for a few brief seconds, and I wondered once more at the advances that had been achieved whilst I slumbered. I was further amazed when my friends told me that it was possible to fly to the New World in only three hours. Upon my remarking that it seemed the world was hardly big enough to constrain mankind they said that man had indeed broken free from earth and had travelled to the moon. After this revelation nothing more will surprise me!

"Arosa" herself contained many marvellous innovations of great interest to a seafarer such as myself. Her rigging was of wire rope, the diameter of which was no thicker than the stem of a pipe. The ropes and sails were of a material far superior to anything we had in our day - indeed some of the sails were well over thirty years old and still in good shape. Cooking was done on a little stove which burnt a gas similar to marsh gas which was stored in an iron bottle. The heads were contained in an unbelievably cramped compartment right forward with an ingenious pumping arrangement to expel the waste. Upon my observing that our 'direct' method was better and simpler I was reminded that ladies often sailed on the boat so a method which preserved a sense of decorum was necessary. Buckets, bowls and fend-offs were made of a light flexible material which I was told was 'plastic'. I was also told that these days most small boats were constructed entirely from a similar material. I felt that I would feel far more secure in a wooden boat. Another wonder was the radio; a small box emitting the voice of someone talking many miles away. The main use was to receive reports foretelling the weather for the next day (although my friends usually managed to remember to listen five minutes after the report had ended!). A similar invention was electricity, an invisible force that travelled along metal cables to where it was required. On shore the street lamps and lamps in people's houses were powered by it, and on board "Arosa" the navigation and cabin lights used it. It was kept in a heavy box called the 'battery' (why it was called this I know not; in my day a battery was something very different!).

At abut six hours in the evening we slipped and used the engine until we were clear of the anchorage, when we hoisted all sail, heading across the bay towards Start Point. To be under sail again was a truly joyful experience. Dusk fell as we were off Start Point, and the wind dropped so the engine was used again for a while. A short time later we came to a gentle halt. We found that the boat had become entangled in the line to lobster pots with the marker buoy caught round the rudder blade. (The buoy, which in my day would have been made from tarred cork, was of plastic.) The rudder blade was designed to pivot upwards to

enable the boat to enter shallow water so by allowing the blade to lift the line was released and we continued on our way.

After a quiet night, the next day dawned grey with perhaps two miles visibility and frequent heavy showers. The only instruments of navigation were a device called a "Walker log" - a small spinner on the end of a line attached to an instrument mounted on the transom which records distance run - and a remarkable device for measuring the water depth automatically. My friends told me of an even more marvellous instrument which, using radio waves, would give the latitude and longitude of the vessel to an accuracy of less than half a cable. They eschewed this device, however, as taking all the skill and satisfaction out of navigating and I had to agree with them. Nonetheless there was considerable debate during the afternoon as to our position as we had not obtained a fix since leaving Start Point the previous evening. As dusk began to fall, though, the Ile de Vierge light appeared to port and sometime after Le Four light showed on the port bow - a near perfect landfall. The lights, powered by electricity, were far brighter and more numerous than the beacons of my day.

Our course was through the Chenel du Four between Ushant and the mainland: this was a passage I had never made as we always passed well beyond Ushant. Even if we had managed successfully to avoid the various pitfalls of the Chenel we would have been sitting ducks to the guns at Le Conquet. The entrance to the Chenel was reached in the early hours of the next morning - and an amazing sight presented itself. The Chenel was just a mass of winking white, green and red lights; every headland and rock had its own light. I could not imagine how anyone could thread their way through this maze. Fortunately the tide was full and did not turn in our favour until first light - when everything became clear and navigation was a lot simpler. The tide swept us through, past the now silent batteries of Le Conquet and St Matthew's Point. Off the Point we sighted our first French warship - and iron frigate coming out of Brest. She took not the slightest interest in us: a little different from two centuries ago when the only French frigates we saw when blockading Brest were hull down and cramming on all sail to regain harbour before we could catch them.

As we headed across the Avant Goulet de Brest memories came flooding back, memories of the many months we spent blockading the port, at sea in all weathers. The hills and headlands I now gazed on once more had become indelibly etched on my mind during those grim times.

We were making for Camaret, on the south side of the Goulet. Once, when on patrol, to keep the Frenchies on their toes, at first light we had slipped round the headland into Camaret Bay and released a broadside at the fort hoping to make off before the enemy could man their guns. They were more alert than we thought, however, as hardly had the echoes of our guns faded than theirs burst forth, fortunately with no great accuracy, as we made our escape taking care to avoid the guns on the Point of Toulinguet. Today there was no such drama as we slipped quietly

round the point and across the bay, past the dormant fort and into the harbour where we secured at mid-afternoon.

There was much of interest at Camaret, the fort, and beside it the seamen's Chapel of Notre Dame of Rocamadour, the slipway with a small merchant ship of a type I remembered well undergoing reconstruction. The art of the shipwright obviously still lives in France. The fishing fleet was a sorry sight; it was laid up on the shore and would never fish again.

The following morning we set sail, rounding the Point of Toulinguet to the west of Camaret, now devoid of guns, and heading south between the curiously shaped rock stacks known as the Piles of Peas. Off Cape Goat, at the entrance to the Bay of Douarnenez, an event occurred which you will believe only if you also believe that I was truly reincarnated after being interred for two hundred years. We came upon a vessel the like of which I had only heard tell from men of learning, a vessel I and my companions believed to be a Phoenician galley and which had been extinct for many centuries ... How, why and wherefore we knew not but this was not some drink-induced hallucination. Indeed, it was but noon and we had taken no liquor whatsoever this day. We marvelled at this happening as we turned east into the Bay and headed for Douarnenez where we arrived at about one bell of the first dog.

The next morning we visited a collection of craft at Douarnenez, saved from bygone ages. Although none were from my era I was interested to see the way the ship had developed during the last 200 years. In a yard beside the river, craftsmen were practising the shipwrights' art using huge balks of oak and employing methods familiar to me.

We set off again in the afternoon, making to windward to Morgat in the north-west corner of the bay. Here we were stormbound for two days, the wind from the south-west whistling through the rigging of our vessel. The third day the wind had moderated enough to start on our return journey, first back to Camaret. We set off from Morgat well reefed and met some steep seas off the Cape Goat, thereafter the weather moderated and we got into Camaret in the afternoon. As we had to leave early next morning to catch the tide through the Chenel du Four we went ashore to buy provisions for the return passage. Alas, we found that the day was a feast day and the shops were all shut up.

The next morning as soon as the shops opened we purchased the victuals for our return journey - mainly food contained in metal canisters and bottles of good French wine. We slipped at about four bells of the forenoon watch and headed north. The wind, though favourable from the west, was light and we used the engine to ensure we caught the tide through the Chenel. Soon after leaving Camaret we spotted a large warship coming out from Brest (I was told it was a 'destroyer').

At Le Four light we made course for Portsmouth, our destination. In the evening we had our last sight of France. The next day we suffered heavy showers and poor visibility. During the forenoon we heard the once familiar sound of gunfire and a few minutes later a French warship

emerged from a fogbank. My friends assured me that the ship was only involved in exercises. In the late afternoon we came up on a heavy concentration of merchant shipping. Some of the ships were gargantuan with their cargoes carried in boxes piled high on their decks. It was explained to me that, because of the number of ships converging at this point, a separation zone had been established with west-bound vessels passing to the north and east-bound ships to the south. To keep clear of them we sailed in the separation zone.

The seas rolling up the Channel had become quite a size, the more impressive viewed from such a small craft. However "Arosa" was completely at home as she forged steadily north-eastwards. I was reminded of being homeward-bound after long and arduous voyages, of the relief at having escaped death, injury or disease and the anticipation of meeting loved ones and living a civilised existence for a few short weeks.

That night was clear and moonlit. The seas seemed even bigger and the ship appeared to be travelling with the speed of a bird as she was pushed onwards by wind and wave.

The next morning the wind had died and by midday we were obliged to use the engine. The visibility became poor and we were unable to catch sight of our intended landfall, the Isle of Wight. We altered course to the north to close the shore and fix our position but were surprised to see appear out of the mist, where the Isle of Wight should have been, a box-carrying ship. Then faintly we heard to the east of us, a fog signal emitted by a buoy which was identified as the South Owers Buoy, off Selsey Bill. Indeed our progress during the night had been so swift that we had overshot the Isle of Wight by some miles. We turned north-west and soon came upon the Nab Tower, a structure of iron sticking out of the sea and with something of a tilt to it. We headed in towards the Solent and soon I could make out the familiar forts guarding Spithead. As we approached Portsmouth, we beheld a sad sight. A small vessel (called a 'tug' I was told) appeared from the port towing a frigate - of the Leander class my friends said - which, having served out her time, was on her way to be broken up. In my day ships did not suffer the same fate - they were either lost in action or driven ashore, or they were retired to serve as hulks, for the storage of goods or the housing of convicts.

We entered busy Portsmouth harbour at dusk and there to my extreme delight were the familiar masts and yards of the good old Victory, now permanently in dry dock. I was amazed at how well she had been preserved, for even in my day she was an elderly lady - but I remember how fine she looked when I saw her once under full sail leading the Channel Fleet into Plymouth Sound.

I was sorry our voyage was now at an end and that I had to return to my berth in Dartmouth. My companions also had to return to Dartmouth to collect their carriage and I accompanied them, travelling in a train of long carriages linked together and running on iron rails, pulled by an engine. The train travelled at a fearful speed. We had two long

waits, at Salisbury and at Exeter, where we changed trains. I could not understand the point of having trains which travelled at such speed when we had to wait for so long between times. It was during these waits that I dictated this tale to my friends.

We finally reached Totnes and took a motor carriage to Dartmouth whence we arrived in the warm quiet of a June evening, and I returned to my slumbers, to dream of the voyage in "Arosa".

(Scribe's Note: We did not discover the origin of the 'Phoenician galley', but three weeks later a replica of a trireme appeared on the River Thames.)

GELLIE'S NORTHERN ISLES CRUISE 1994 (T4)
By Michael Dixon

This year GELLIE was ready. She had already spent a long weekend away at Portsoy's Traditional Boat Festival, and most of the minor bugs had been ironed out. The water from the new tank still tasted of TCP, but as long as we stuck to bottles and cans....! Following the winter's refit programme (complete refurbishment of galley and heads, and the creation of dedicated spare gear stowage in the fore peak), the aft cabin no longer resembled something from the local tip, and was habitable - just as well as there were four adults on board for the first week of the cruise. Ian was back again having missed a year, and, for the first time, Ailsa and David were on board.

Saturday 23rd July - Stonehaven towards Fair Isle

Having slept aboard on the Friday night, the only requirement was to lay in fresh supplies from the Auld Toon Bakery. Even so, it was after 1000 before we motored out in a flat calm. Within minutes, we were joined by a school of silver backed dolphins out to enjoy themselves for twenty minutes or so. This was the first of several visits we were to get over the next few hours.

The wind filled in after lunch and the main and the spinnaker were hoisted - Ian instructing the crew on the finer points of foredeck drill. We continued like that throughout the evening, setting watches (three and three) at 2000. Midnight saw us well offshore Rattray Head, setting course in the general direction of Fair Isle and Shetland.

Sunday 24th July - Stonehaven to Fair Isle

Dawn was early (it never really gets truly dark at this time of year in these latitudes) with the sun rising well before 0500. GELLIE was going well, creating a good wake which reflected the early morning pinks and lilacs from the sky. The forecast was OK, predicting force five to six later in the day. We enjoyed a late extended breakfast, David claiming that R&R had nothing to do with rest and recreation - it stood for roll and regurgitation.

Throughout the day we had ideal sailing and GELLIE was going really well. None of us really fancied another night at sea, so the course

was altered towards Fair Isle in preference to Shetland. The tidal streams round Fair Isle can be interesting and it pays to take heed of the sailing directions. Thanks to an EEC development grant, the harbour at North Haven is well protected. (We later discovered that the rock for the artificial breakwater came from Norway aboard a Dutch barge towed by a Russian tug). We did experience an interesting twenty minutes in some very turbulent seas off Bu Ness, before turning for the approach to the harbour.

We moored outboard of two yachts, the outer one Swedish, the inner one the OYC ketch SPIRIT OF BOADICEA, 35 hours and 162 miles out from Stonehaven. GELLIE had performed well, and the crew deserved their liberal night-caps.

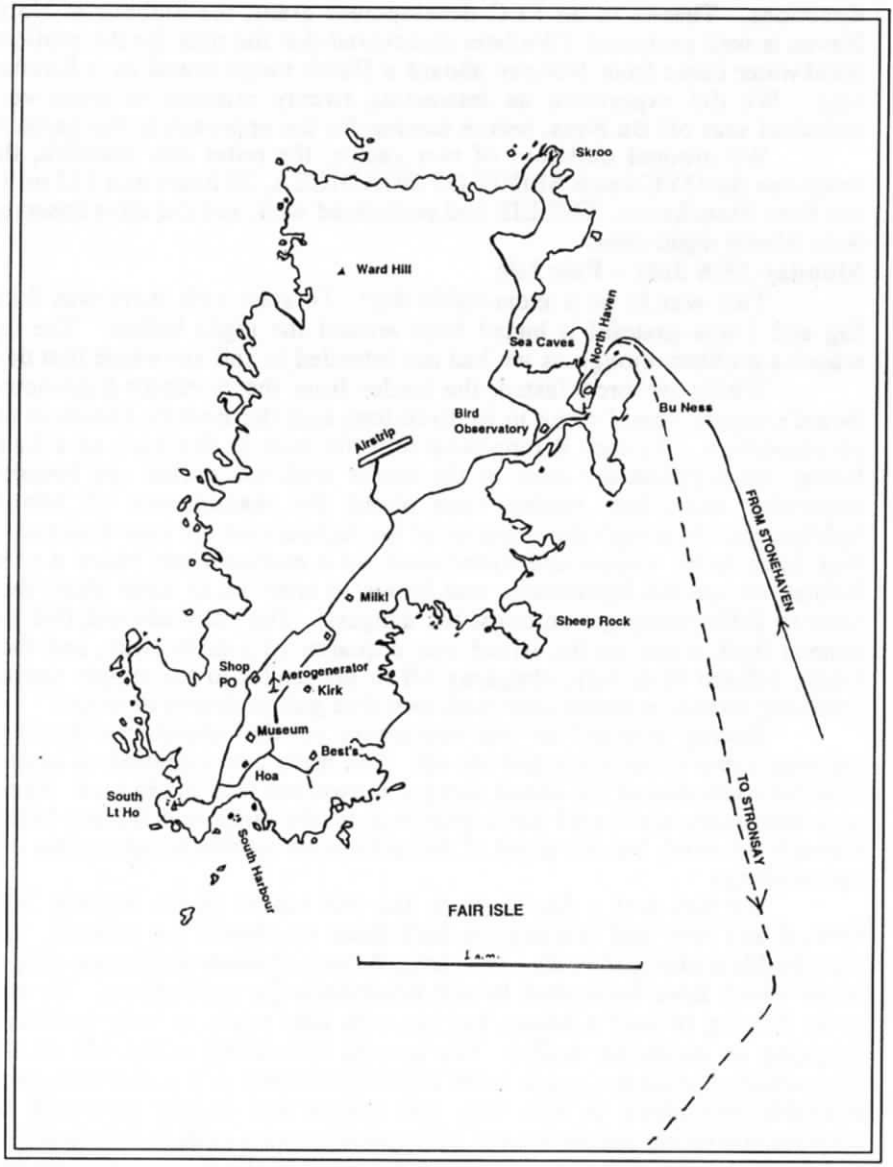
Monday 25th July - Fair Isle

This was to be a memorable day! To start with there was thick fog and I was grateful it hadn't been around the night before. The fog wasn't a problem though as we had not intended to sail anywhere that day.

Whilst we breakfasted, the tender from the Northern Lighthouse Board's supply vessel came in to disembark half the Board's Directors for an inspection. As they disappeared into the mist in the back of a Land Rover, we supplied the crew of the tender with tea, coffee and biscuits, discussing their hair raising tales about the maintenance of remote lighthouses. Although the majority of the lighthouses are now unmanned, they have to be visited and maintained on a routine basis twice a year. Whilst we use the lighthouses and buoys to warn us to keep clear, they have to deliberately get amongst the dangers! The crew advised that the nearest fresh water on the island was a quarter of a mile away, and they kindly offered their help, chugging off in the tender to the supply vessel, returning twenty minutes later with two five gallon drums of water.

Having planned to see something of the island, we knocked together some sandwiches and set off. The main concentration of houses is at the south end of the island along a narrow but well made road. Every now and again we would catch glimpses of the cliffs and the sea below through the mist, but for most of the time were unable to appreciate our surroundings.

We had met a family from the Isle whilst at the Portsoy boat festival and they had insisted we look them up should we make it. Ian Best builds traditional yoals - low, long, beamy, shallow draft open clinker boats which have been used by the inhabitants for generations. He was away helping to roof a house, but his wife Lise made us very welcome, dragging us inside for coffee. We learned something of the life on the Isle, which despite the much more reliable transport and communications available nowadays, is still very self reliant and largely governed by traditional crofting supplemented with specific trades such as boat building and knitting. The lifestyle is measured - none of the hectic daily routine which the majority of us experience - and very much determined by the vagaries of the weather which affects so much, from the fishing and the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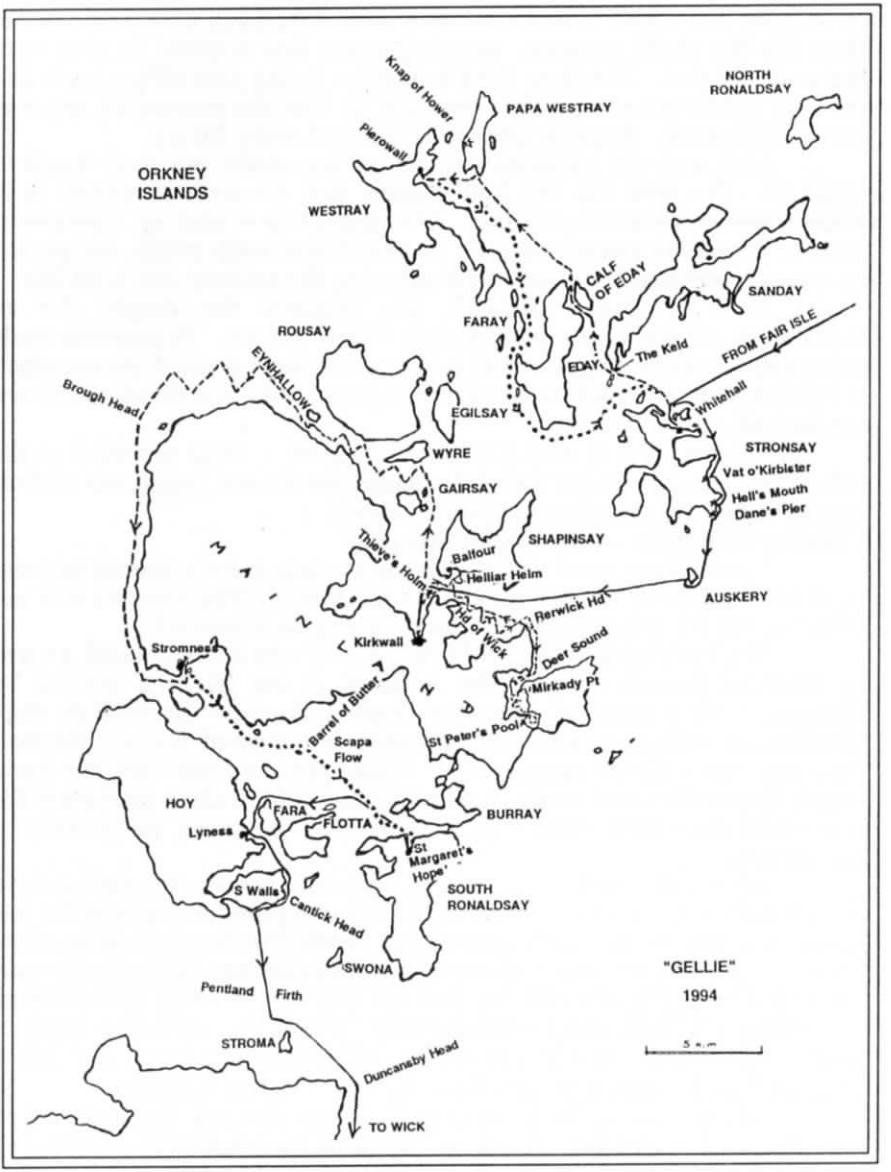
ORKNEY
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OF EDAY
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ROUSAY
EDAY
The Keld
FROM FAIR ISLE
EYNHALLOW
Brough Head
EGILSAY
Whitehall
WYRE
STRONSAY
Vat o'Kirbister
GAIRSAY
Hell's Mouth
Dane's Pier
SHAPINSAY
Balfour
Thieve's Holm
Helliar Holm
AUSKERY
Rerwick Hd
Kirkwall
Head of Wick
Deer Sound
Stromness
Mirkady Pt
Barrel of Butter
Scapa
Flow
St Peter's Pool
HOY
FARA
FLOTTA
BURRAY
Lyness
St
Margaret's
Hope
S Walls
Cantick Head
SOUTH
RONALDSAY
SWONA
"GELLIE"
1994
Pentland
Firth
STROMA
Duncansby Head
TO WICK

harvest, to the operation of the twice weekly ferry to Shetland. What was noticeable was the tremendous spirit of community - it must have taken us an hour and a half to make our way with Lise from their home to the shop via the small museum, stopping every few minutes to chat with everyone we met. The shop (which doubles as the post office, bank and the only public wc on the Isle!) provided us with the necessities, but was out of fresh milk. A quick 'phone call located some for us.

Lise and the children left us as we made our way back to GELLIE. By now the fog had cleared and we were rewarded with magnificent views across the Isle. After detouring to pick up a couple of pints of creamy unpasturised milk in an old lemonade bottle, we carried on over the open hillside and cliffs enjoying the scenery and wild life.

Back on board GELLIE, Ian prepared the dinghy for an exploration of sea caves just outside North Haven. Inquisitive seals examined our slow progress and a family of shags seemed unconcerned at being herded ahead of us into the first cave - they just dived and swam out beneath us.

We returned to GELLIE at about 2000 - Ailsa presided in the galley and Dave produced Fair Isle fondue for dessert (segments of fruit dipped in hot molten Mars bars - delicious!).

Tuesday 26th July - Fair Isle to Stronsay

I could have spent another day on the Isle, but we needed to press on if we were to spend any time at all in Orkney. The forecast was not brilliant, but OK'ish, promising a bit of a slog to windward.

The Isle's ferry GOOD SHEPHERD IV was being readied; owned by Shetland Islands council, she is based at the Isle and crewed by Islanders. All manner of cargo was loaded aboard - the rubbish skip, bicycles, gas cylinders, petrol cans (prominently marked 'Nurse'), the mail bags and half a dozen passengers. Whilst the ferry provides the basic supply line to the community, it does take four able bodied men away for two whole days each week - quite a drain on resources, particularly at harvest time.

We left the berth mid morning - weather dreary, overcast, drizzle and wind from the south. Motorsailing ESE, we soon lost sight of the Isle astern, and once we had sufficient offing, I altered to the south west, close hauled on port. It was pretty miserable with continuous light rain (the sort which seems to get everywhere), and the very lumpy short seas pitching and rolling GELLIE about unpredictably. David was suffering badly; I became concerned, but with ten minutes of getting him below and into a sleeping bag, his colour returned and he was sleeping soundly.

At the back of 1400 the frontal system dumped its final load of rain, the wind veered four points and dropped from a five to a three, and the sky cleared from the west. The wind continued to drop and I decided to motorsail the rest of the way. By 1800 the sun was out and various lumps of land and associated landmarks appeared - low lying Sanday to the west and north west - Stronsay fine on the port bow - even the Orkney

mainland. The meal consisted of basic GELLIE goulash, unsophisticated but satisfying.

We were rewarded by a superb sunset as we made our approach to Whitehall on Stronsay - mooring at the old pier at 2200. It had been a difficult day, less than 50 miles, but once again demonstrated GELLIE's inherent strength and ability to look after her more fragile occupants.

Wednesday 27th July - Stronsay to Westray (via Papa Westray)

A lazy day. Getting up late, leisurely breakfast and find Jimmy Stout the harbourmaster "Oh - pay your harbour dues when you get to Kirkwall - it'll save me the bother of a receipt", but I was asked to sign the register of vessels calling at Whitehall (dating back to the early 30's).

Our destination was Pierowall on Westray and I had a fair idea of the passage I wanted to take - one with land on both sides! We sailed from the pier, out through Papa sound, round the south end of Sanday and north up Eday sound. Transiting the Keld brought home the strength of the tidal streams through the sounds and round the headlands - as the pilot suggests, it is more profitable to sail with the tide rather than with the wind.

The wind died as GELLIE entered Calf sound, so we motored for an hour and a half through the sound and on towards Papa Westray. Later on the wind returned and we enjoyed a very pleasant hour's sail before going alongside the ro-ro pier at Papa Westray. The small island looked neglected, but it was good to stretch the legs ashore - wild flowers, bird life, wide views across to nearby Westray and to the distant North Ronaldsay. We failed to find the Knap of Howar, reputed to be the oldest standing dwelling house in NW Europe (3500BC), and I couldn't help but compare the area around Papa Westray's one and only tourist attraction with the high profile but fenced off Stonehenge!

It took us three quarters of an hour to motor over to Pierowall on Westray, where David, now fully recovered, presided in the galley.

Thursday 28th July Westray to Stronsay

Late departures were becoming the norm, but the excuse was a long leisurely breakfast! Pierowall is home to a thriving sailing club catering for all tastes. Two local men were rigging a 100 year old traditional sailing yoal and a bunch of youngsters were having sailing lessons in Toppers. I chatted for a while with the crew from the small inter-island ferry. This was going to be a long day for them as the local football team had chartered the ferry to take them to their fixture on Stronsay - two and a half hours each way!

Motoring off just after 1100 we had the spinnaker up at noon heading down the Sound of Faray. Sailing along with land on both sides does make a difference - Eday to port, Faray to starboard - much better than the up and down the coast back home. We experienced some turbulence as we shot out into Westray Firth, nothing serious, but a gentle reminder that these waters have to be treated with respect at all times.

Regrettably the wind turned light and variable, and as I wanted to round the south end of Eday before the tide turned foul, we motorsailed onwards. Aisla notes in the logbook "Executive decision not to go to Sanday since still not thru' Spurness Sound! Will make an 'early start' tomorrow". Accordingly it was back to Whitehall, awning rigged and galley working full tilt by 1900. Up to the Stronsay Hotel after dinner, where Jimmy Stout (a man of many hats!) was struggling to keep up with demand for drinks - the football match was over (Westray won 2-0) and the teams were thirsty.

Friday 29th July - Stronsay to Kirkwall (via Auskery)

Breakfast was actually on the go by 0745 - wonder of wonders! A last visit to the Hotel in a final attempt to pay harbour dues (failed, but I was introduced to Horace, the elderly pet raven in the back garden). A couple of locals were genuinely puzzled that we weren't staying for the wedding that was to take place later in the day. The fact that we were complete strangers didn't seem to be an issue.

It was a dullish morning - fitful wind - and we motored and sailed on and off all morning. It took us a bit of searching, but we managed to locate a couple of the natural features on the east side of the island. Firstly the gloup (collapsed sea cave leaving a natural rock arch) at the Vat o' Kirbister, then on to Hell's Mouth where there is a row of three large sea caves with wicked off-lying half tide rocks - peaceful enough today, but terrifying in an easterly gale with the 'mouth' to leeward. Further down the coast is Dane's Pier, a natural feature reputed to be a Viking harbour.

At noon we rendezvoused with HOPEFUL bringing Mike Holgate (sometime colleague from work) and his family back from Auskery - our next destination. At 1300 we rounded the south end of the island and entered the tiny and largely natural boat harbour, with its very small man made pier. The harbour is probably wider than it looks, but I share the Burnett's apprehension when they visited in 1978 in A31 PEANUT (see front cover 1978/9 bulletin - thanks Colin!). The island is privately owned, so we didn't stray too far from GELLIE, but there was plenty to watch in the way of wild life as we had lunch.

On leaving Auskery, we had a splendid spinnaker reach across Stronsay Firth and Shapinsay Sound towards Kirkwall. KATIELOK II, the steel built Irish boat we'd seen in Whitehall slowly overhauled us, finally getting ahead by cutting inside Thieve's Holm. Close hauled we had a great thrash down Kirkwall Bay, but discretion took over as the ferries began to pop out of the harbour. Sails were stowed and we motored into the inner harbour, mooring alongside KATIELOK II.

All in all a varied and interesting day - plenty to look at and some great sailing. A good evening too - showers, Chinese restaurant for a meal, large quantities of rum and an impromptu pasta and sauce supper about 2315!

Saturday 30th July - Kirkwall

Crew change day. Ailsa, David and Ian were to meet Richard and Terry on the mainland to get the car keys. The morning sort of disappeared what with laundry, stores, gas bottle exchange, etc. before the crew caught the bus to Stromness at 1230.

I spent the afternoon doing all those jobs for which the boat ideally needs to be empty - engine checks, topping up oil levels, tightening prop shaft couplings, greasing keel bolts, a couple of frayed whippings, a repair to a wood trim, etc. etc. etc.

Terry and Richard arrived safely at 2030. The welcoming dram was downed, the town was "done", and, after a night-cap, a relatively early night.

Sunday 31st July - Kirkwall to Shapinsay (via Deer Sound)

It was to be an interesting day - the sort of day when afterwards you wish you had stayed put! But then ports and harbours rot both men and ships!

The chart showed Deer Sound to be a potential anchorage for the night, so we sailed from Kirkwall at 1100. This time I cut inside Thieve's Holm, altering course eastwards towards a rather dense looking fog bank. I debated about proceding, and decided to wait a while in Balfour bay on Shapinsay, where we dropped anchor temporarily. After an hour or so the visibility improved, and we sailed from the anchorage to engage in an interesting tacking session down through the String, in and out of the fog, until we finally rounded Rerwick Head at 1515. Although dull and grey, I decided to press on into Deer Sound with the view of anchoring overnight. The navigation was very interesting as the bay is relatively shallow with long shingle spits extending from all the 'corners', but we made it down to St Peter's Pool without incident. Having gone to all this trouble, we were disappointed - quite an exposed anchorage with very few features to relieve the view of very low-lying land all but encircling us.

Retracing our course, we rounded Mirkady point before the poor visibility returned. Fortunately the coast is steep with no off-lying dangers and we were able to keep the low cliffs in view some four or five boat lengths off to port. Off Rerwick Head, I altered to the west across the mouth of Inganess Bay - a distance of two miles. With the visibility down to less than a cable, it was disturbing to note the Decca positioning us half a mile inland! The log reads "Check the ferry timetables for possible traffic - looks OK - but what about the non-ferries?!?!). Thankfully, we picked up the Head of Wick at a cable, more or less right ahead, allowing us to fix our position before altering course across the String. Picking up Helliar Holm on the starboard bow at half a cable was a relief, and we groped our way into the tiny harbour on Shapinsay, mooring at 2000. As Terry remarked "What a grey day".

Monday 1st August - Shapinsay to Kirkwall

Wet dripping fog greeted us when we stuck our heads out. And so it stayed for the next six hours. We did spend some time ashore going

up to the village shop where it was even more gloomy as the entire island had been plunged into darkness for essential power line maintenance. Not our day! The Decca was giving us the electronic equivalent of two fingers, refused to function and sulked.

At 1530, I made yet another climb up the ladder to look over the wall to seaward, to find it clearing, so lines were hurriedly thrown aboard and we made a break for it. Visibility improved steadily and by the time we arrived in Kirkwall the sun was shining. After supper, we decided to get off the boat for a while to enjoy the local hospitality.

Tuesday 2nd August - Kirkwall to Stromness

Up at 0700 with a sense of purpose as we planned to make the longish haul round the mainland to Stromness. Before departing I managed to settle up the harbour dues at last - outstanding since our arrival in Orkney at Whitehall!

Sails were up by 0900 and by 0920 the first reef was in. We sailed all day, much of the time beating to windward. Navigationally the passage was straightforward, north from Kirkwall, to the east of Gairsay, south of Wyre and north westward through Eynhallow Sound between the mainland and Rousay. The course takes an interesting dog leg half way up the sound, part of the time following the line of a dyke (wall) running down the hillside. The sea was very lumpy off Eynhallow, with wind over tide, but once through this we began to experience the very different long Atlantic swell setting up from the south west.

It was a further four hours before we managed to round Brough Head and head south with the wind free. It was a fine sail about a mile offshore, impressive cliffs with many caves and gloups, the sea breaking at their feet.

Shortly after 1900. we got the engine on and stowed sails, entering Stromness on the last of the flood at 2000, to moor outboard of CALISTO. By unanimous decision, we headed for the local fish and chip shop for supper.

Wednesday 3rd August - Stromness to St Margaret's Hope

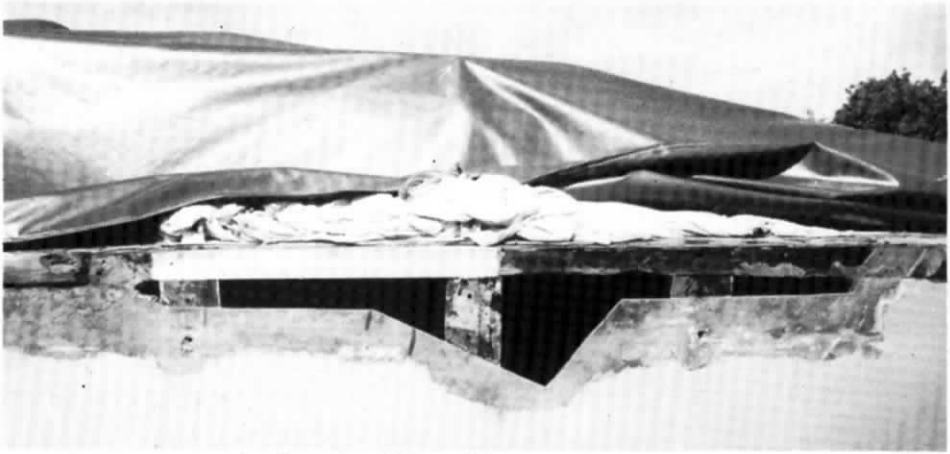
It was back to the misty weather again, but the morning was well occupied with the usual round of shops, showers and water. Richard dislodged his specs overboard whilst wrestling with the water hose. Fortunately there was a boat nearby with a party of German amateur divers aboard, one of whom kitted up, and, on the third attempt came to the surface triumphantly brandishing Richard's specs. Richard went off round to the boat with a bottle of Captain Morgan's Spicy as a thank-you, and was duly photographed with the diver.

After a somewhat delayed lunch, we left Stromness at 1530 to sail across Scapa Flow. Although it was a pretty dreary day we had a good sail for almost three hours, emphasising the size of this virtually landlocked anchorage. At 1900 we entered the bay at St. Margaret's Hope on South Ronaldsay, mooring alongside a fishing boat at the west pier. I was glad to be alongside - the visibility was deteriorating rapidly.

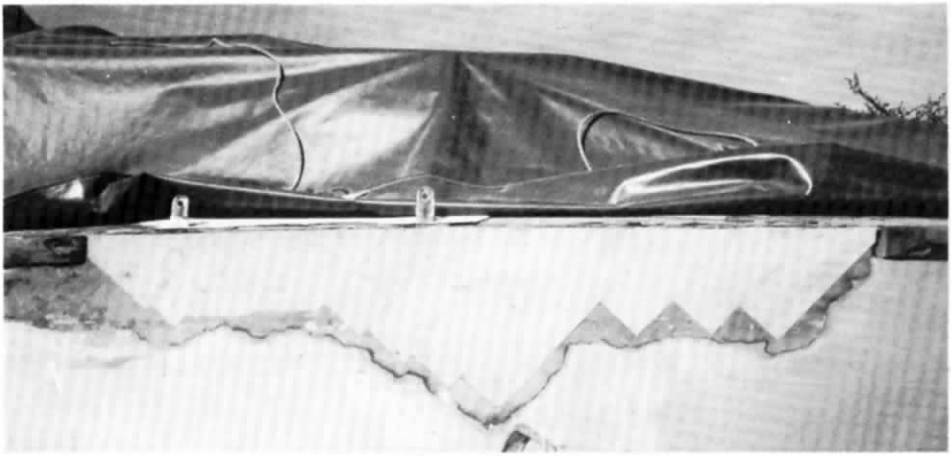
Too close for comfort!

"Kookaburra" at West Mersea 1994

Repairs done by John Searle to one of his fleet
(see "Editorial")



One day I'll get him to write .....



..... an article on the subject (Ed)

"Moby Dick" derelict at the Medley Boat Station, Oxford 1990

"Moby Dick" restored 1994

Photos from the archives:

Above: *"Moby Dick" c. '78/'79*
Then owner Group
Capt R B Wardman

Above Left: *Another Junk Rig*
conversion unidentified
at Keyhaven c. 1989/90

Left: *And who is this then?*

After supper we walked along to the village. The road skirted the bay, the sea on one side and a low bank on the other planted with a delightful selection of flowering shrubs - fuchsia, buddleia, honeysuckle - in complete contrast to the usual gorse and broom. We had been advised there were two hotels, one quiet, one interesting. We elected for the quiet life!

Returning on board, the slop-slop-slop of the wavelets beneath the counter were threatening Richard's sleep, so we elected to turn GELLIE round, re-mooring head to wind. It had not the slightest effect! We gave Richard a more than generous night-cap by way of compensation.

Thursday 4th August - St Margaret's Hope to Wick (via Lyness)

It was a reasonable morning - patches of fog, but sunny which hopefully would burn off any remaining mist. I'd established the best time to cross the Pentland Firth as late afternoon. Rather than sit alongside, we sailed across the south side of Scapa Flow to Lyness. We passed inshore of the two Flotta terminal SBM's (speaking with Arthur Batty - an old ship-mate of mine, now working as a pilot at Flotta), rounded Fara, leaving Hoy to starboard. We moored at Lyness just after noon at the most impressive jetty in Orkney, a legacy from the naval base. The Scapa Flow exhibition at Lyness is well worth a visit - an unusual collection of memorabilia from both world wars. Back on board for lunch, and to while away a couple of hours before setting off.

The Clyde Cruising Club directions are very comprehensive in their description of the firth, giving several alternative crossings. We motored from Lyness at 1518, rounding Cantick Head just after 1600 to take the last of the west going stream along South Walls. I was none too happy with the visibility, for although we had well over a mile on the island side, I could see nothing of the "other" side, and the Pentland Firth is not somewhere to be stumbling around in fog with neither radar nor Decca/GPS.

Nothing ventured as they say, so we presented the transom to Orkney and set off on the recommended route - right into one of the most intense thunderstorms I've ever experienced. Terry was on the helm and Richard on the foredeck and I don't reckon we could see further than fifty feet, the rain was that intense. Fortunately the storm was short lived, but did nothing to clear up the visibility - I was not happy! But at 1752, fifty minutes after our last confirmed fix, we spotted land fine on the port bow. Never mind that it ought to have been on the starboard bow (we were set to the east much less than predicted), at least I now knew our position and we were no longer in the middle of the Firth. I was now confident to bear away south east for Duncansby Head - rounding it just before 1900. This impressive chunk of mainland Britain was looking particularly eerie with very low cloud and mist swirling round the detached sea stacks.

I had thought the visibility would remain good, but no, it deteriorated yet again, and we reverted to rock-dodging down the coast towards Wick. Wick Bay has a number of dangers so it was interesting

to enter the bay by dead reckoning, and rewarding to pick up the south pier light just as planned. 2030 saw us moored in the outer harbour, relaxing after a rather trying few hours.

Friday 5th August - Wick to Peterhead

After topping up with diesel and some fresh provisions, we motored from Wick. Richard rigged the Autohelm which is ideal for long tedious passages under power. In complete contrast to the previous day, the visibility was excellent and we never lost sight of land all day as we cut directly across the Moray Firth towards Fraserburgh.

By noon the wind arrived and we set sail. At 1530, I yielded to crew pressure and hoisted the spinnaker and we bowled along nicely for a couple of hours. We had just made a pot of tea, when at 1730, GELLIE told us she'd had enough, rounded up into the wind, in the process splitting the spinnaker across the foot from clew to clew. There then followed forty-five minutes of semi- organised chaos sorting out the mess. (It was my fault, but my tip is - don't let fly both spinnaker sheets - it's then very difficult to get hold of this floating kite streaming horizontally to leeward from the masthead!)

1830 saw us back on course, goosewinged, roaring along - occasionally at eight knots down the face of the, by now, considerable waves.

I had always pretended we were going into Fraserburgh for the night, but secretly hoped the tide would remain favourable to allow us to round Rattray Head and into Peterhead. To keep the crew happy I promised to cook dinner. We gybed (controlled!) twice to allow us to weather Cainbulg Beacon and rounded Rattray at 2300. By now there was a fine drizzle and much lighter winds, so sails were handed and we motored the last couple of miles to Peterhead bay, dropping anchor off the Lido at half past midnight.

Saturday 6th August - Peterhead to Stonehaven

I wanted to catch the flood tide south, so it was up at 0600 and off shortly after 0700, motoring out from the bay. Sails were hoisted off Buchan Ness lighthouse - Autohelm on - a pleasant relaxing sail down the familiar coastline. A scratch lunch consisting of the "leftovers" (including the remains of the wine) was consumed whilst off Balmedie. "Hawkeye" (Ian) called us up when we passed Girdle Ness to establish our ETA. 1500 saw us entering Stonehaven bay where we handed sails and started the engine. All was not well with the throttle - in fact a bracket weld had fractured - and we entered the harbour and manoeuvred onto the mooring with Richard more or less upside down in the engine compartment operating the throttle with a pair of Mole grips.

So - the end of the 1994 cruise. Some excellent sailing, some not so good sailing and not too much motoring. The cruising ground was very good - plenty of interest in terms of scenery and challenging navigation. Yes, I'll have to go to Fair Isle again - that was the highlight of the trip - and Orkney will have to be explored further, but then

there's always Shetland, Norway.....
Distance covered: sailing 357 nm, motoring 154 nm, total 511 nm.

KATE THOMAS 1990/1993 (A140)
By R Backhaus

Down in the New Forest, in a front garden, on her trailer and freshly painted, she looked, and what is more, **smelt** good - and had a great deal more style than the 24 foot Macwester we then owned. With some groans, and within the limitation imposed by the trailer, the keel mechanisms seemed to work. The owner had impressive photographs of a complete internal and external repainting job he had done, including stripping the hull back to bare wood, and he had a sack of blueprints and AOA journals which added interest. That was in Spring 1990. My initial plans for launching within six weeks were optimistic, by as it happened, nearly a year, despite the good order she was in, and even that was too early ...

Since Summer 1993 we have lived in The Netherlands. KT is now seaworthy, shipshape and being wintered in an old greenhouse close by Amsterdam's airport in what is known as "Winter stalling" - a standard and inexpensive arrangement in this country for storing boats under cover.

So how would I sum up my experience of owning and using an Atalanta, over the last three years?

1. Cost I paid 5,000. Reasonable, I reckoned, for a boat of her pedigree and condition. Since then, and with a policy of going for the better and longer-life options where there were alternatives, I have spent a further 7,000 ... a sum I had not totted up until writing this article. That total was made up as follows:

500 on the deck - a professional repair to the aft deck and transom (I was not confident of my routing and laminating skills, and the previous owner had had some fibre glassing done, which is a recipe for further trouble). This was the expense I had genuinely expected.

1,600 on steel-work: for the boring and bushing (off the boat) of the main keel support assemblies, and the manufacture of six keel bolts and nuts, and clamp plates, all in A4 stainless. These were fabricated to fairly standard dimensions and pattern except for recessing the nut to take a modern 'O' ring seal, seating on a 'top hat' stainless bush. The keel support assemblies responded well to shot blasting and zinc spraying, and came out looking like new. I also bushed the keels themselves.

400 + 3,300 on engines: the original Wortham-Blake Ford 100E was unreliable, smelly and dangerous, despite the reconditioning done by the previous owner. It let us down on our first trip (mast-down) from Teddington to St Katherine's, and continued to disappoint and stress us from that point on. I then tried a Seagull 170 long-shaft outboard, plus remote controls and a transom bracket, as a low cost experiment, but it was a mistake. It had insufficient power and with any sea running the propeller

and exhaust outlet dived too low (choking the exhaust) and rose too high (losing drive). It is sitting now at Bradwell Marina shop awaiting rescue. With a change of circumstances and the offer of work in Holland, I had a new Farymann 18W single cylinder diesel installed (together with a new shaft, cutlass bearing, prop, and exhaust system). This was worth every penny. Starts at the touch of a button, and delivers. The Farymann has now carried us through the inland Dutch waters, through Rotterdam, through Amsterdam (twice, now) and into the Ijsselmeer. Its nominal continuous rating of 6.3 bhp seems plenty, and it fits under a flat and safe cockpit floor.

100 + 40 on tanks: I had a new stainless fuel tank made - an expensive option but I do not like the idea of plastic fuel tanks in a fire. The old galvanised tank weighed a ton, was enormous, and the surveyor rightly condemned it. I replaced the equally heavy and beautifully sculptured galvanised water tank with a plastic collapsible. A good 40 quid's worth.

450 + 275 + 160 on sails and sail handling gear: I have a Sailspar continuous line headsail reefing system - the best (along with Hood?) at about 450, and it is British and robust. To this I have added a Crusader radial cut headsail (275 on Boat Show offer). Performance is very good, after some initial problems with halyard-wrap (a common problem if you do not fit a block to increase the lead angle from the top of the foil) but Sailspar were most helpful and sent out a van with a part to the Orwell, where the problem occurred. The lead of the jibsheet is poor and I am about to add some track to improve the sheeting angle and get the best out of this sail. Having a good sail up front makes me realise that the main needs replacing - the repair work I had done (160) was not good value. I am hoping that a new main will improve speed and make her closer-winded. I am in two minds about mainsail reefing - the original rolling system needs three hands, but does seem, together with the wire halyard and its winch, to be very much a part of KT's character. A slab system would, I believe, be easier to work.

80 on rudder: not liking the look of the rivets between the rudder cheeks I had its sides welded up. I have thought about replacing the blade but have not. The upper pintle has been bushed with nylon. Before that I would often be shocked by what sounded like something crashing into the transom.

Standing rigging - backstay I replaced first, the forestay was replaced together with the Sailspar gear. Shrouds are still original. New stays represent a very small investment, and with the work that went into stripping down, oiling, and refitting the spruce mast, I would not want to place it at risk. (Very few of the original bolts in the mast were intact. Most had turned into two small stalactites of rusty metal, one at each end, separated by dust. Hope, varnish and habit can achieve amazing results.)

Overall - does 12,000 seem too much? With foresight, I would think so. With hindsight? No, of course not!

2. Trailing Don't. Even with a borrowed Range Rover this is too heavy and long a rig. It is possible that one can find easier routes than across London, but I have no stomach to try again. Other drivers give no quarter. Sell the trailer to offset the other expenses. I got 240.

3. Keel mechanism Go for it! I wasted far too much time and wasted other people's, seeking advice, in trying to work around rather than directly tackle the problem of the seized keel bolts and wasted clamp plates. I effectively lost a whole season's sailing through the over enthusiastic use of a sledge hammer and a hydraulic ram, which, despite precautions, disturbed the sealing along the centre-line of the boat where the two halves of the hull are joined in a sandwich between keelson and keel. I had not realised that the hulls were moulded in two halves! In the end, with an 18 inch industrial hacksaw blade in a makeshift handle, operated from under the boat, it only takes a few hours to saw through the mild steel bolts and free the keels. And this is not stressing the boat, only you, particularly at the last moment as you sever a bolt which may be supporting a quarter of a ton of cast iron above you. I recommend you use a professional hole saw to cut around the outside of the tubes where they pass through the outer keel box, so that they come away easily and without doing damage to the ply. You will need a power drill with a right angle chuck for this (hireable from HSS shops). You do not need a sophisticated tower to support the hoist; a simple lean-to strut with its lower end in a block wedged against the base of the jack-box, and its upper end on the bulkhead between cabin and cockpit, works fine.

4. Leaks I had two problems - one I believe I created or exacerbated in trying to push the keel bolts out, the other was I think an old problem poorly repaired. The first (leaks down the centre-line of the boat along the hull joint) was repaired by epoxy injection backed up by glass taping the joint along the underside seam of the boat. Part of the problem was caused by the vast number of screws and remnants of screws used over the years to secure the rubbing strip. These were all extracted, and dowels epoxied in. The other leak was along one lower edge (port, inner) of the keel box. This was repaired easily - the only difficulty being the patience needed to dry out the timber throroughly before injecting the epoxy. KT is now completely dry.

5. Sailing and passage-making We have found Kate easy and fun to sail - stable on all points, and wonderfully manoeuvrable. She is however slower than we had hoped, and her motion is a bit lively. On our East-bound crossing of the North Sea in the summer of 1993, from Harwich to Flushing, into a NE six or seven, the motion was bad enough for me and my friend Les to both be too sick to even think about navigation through the night. The Decca got lost when we needed it most. (A strange extra-sensory phenomenon I have experienced before.) The wind shifted, and we missed Holland, being most surprised at daybreak to find ourselves off Nieuwpoort, in Belgium. How we managed to cover the 40 or so miles between Noord Hinder S and Nieuwpoort, in only four

hours, remains a mystery.

As to the shallow draft ability - we have enjoyed exploring the shallows of the Blackwater, and visiting up river tidal places like Wivenhoe without being subject to the tidal time pressures on a fixed keel boat. The limitation on shallow water sailing is the rudder that is dynamically poor when raised. The self-raising mechanism of the keels is wonderful in allowing a cavalier approach to be taken to short-tacking in a narrow channel. The keel design is of course crazy, with practically all the ballast in the retractable keels whose lifting points are only inches away from the pivot. Those keel jacks are hauling about three tons, at worst, near the top of their travel.

Why is she not faster? Other than a tired mainsail, and the conservative sail area on the standard three quarter rigged boat, she may be overweight, there is a fairly big fixed three blade prop, and the keel boxes have no covers or streamlining along their lower edges. I may try and do something about some of these.

6. Living aboard I am told by Debbi, my partner, that our next boat will have headroom. The Atalanta may lack the internal accommodation of a modern vessel of her length but the aesthetics of the accommodation are very good; the main cabin being very pleasing and uncluttered. There is also some compensation in the very roomy cockpit (too roomy, in a sea - there is too much space to get thrown about in). We have usually been only two or three aboard for any length of time - on the one occasion when there were four of us, one, Andy, was a visiting New Yorker who had just arrived from the States. He was suffering from overwork and jet lag and was luckily rarely up and about when the rest of us were.

7. People I have been lucky in having the benefit of advice and help from friends, colleagues and other A owners (including my dentist who happens also to be an owner) and in the yards, suppliers and professionals who have done work for me. Perhaps one of the best parts of owning an Atalanta is the interest it attracts and the practical benefits that it can bring. Notable were Tough's yard, down in Teddington, South Dock Marina, and Peter Cooper (resident engineer at Bradwell Marina, who installed the diesel). Debbi was taking a break through the period from her career in the NHS and was a full-time undergraduate. She was, so she claimed, happy to have me out of the way at weekends, to avoid distracting her from her studies. She got her First, in Astrophysics.

8. Why Kate Thomas Debbi's maternal grandfather was a merchant seaman, and captained the 1800 ton four-master "Metropolis" so this was a possible choice. But "Metropolis" seemed too grand a name for a 26 footer with a half-inch thick hull, but she had a sister ship, the Kate Thomas. For the record, A140 was initially "Treenlaur III", and was briefly "Leo" before she was "Kate Thomas".

KEEL PINS AND WINDOWS FOR SOLVENDO (A108)
By Geoff Beaumont

Keel Pins

You do not have an Atalanta long before you realise you have an engineered boat, or indeed a floating aeroplane. If you have owned a traditional wooden boat this will be all the more obvious. It will also be obvious that most of the metal work was really never intended to spend its life submerged, the keel pins being the most obvious, and I suggest dearest, to our hearts.

Reflecting upon the previous papers on this subject, and the many suggestions and ideas tried and tested, I have not heard of many successful solutions.

I think most owners will be able to remember vehicles with grease nipples, if not to the spring pins, at least to the steering system, and this logic appears to be the main solution applied to the keel pins. However, let me offer for thought the problem as I see it: the keel pin does not rotate in its housing, it cannot due to the register flat. The load applied remains constant regardless of the keel's position. The designed seal is in the wrong position. Lateral movement is little or nothing.

Fitting grease nipples: grease is a science in its own right and if different types are mixed they will almost certainly solidify due to their acid or alkaline base, and cause seizing as bad if not worse than rusting. The grease will exude from the unloaded side of the pin leaving the loaded face dry (remember we used to jack up our vehicles to grease them). Even if this is done while lowering and raising the keel it will only rotate on the exposed section of the pin, which is well lubricated by water. The seal should be at the outer end of the tube, by internal 'O' ring as in diagram (1), or alternatively fit 'O' rings to the pin (2). I think the pin is over engineered and could stand groove machining.

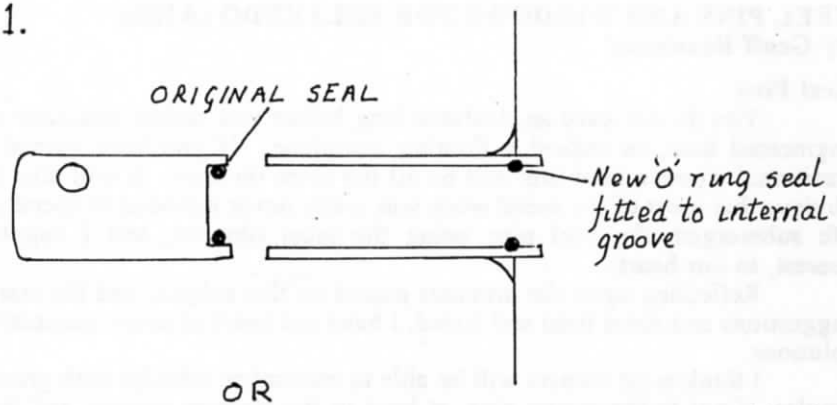
I would also clean and anti-rust the tubes and pins, paint, and assemble using a coating of non setting sealer. The original inner neoprene seal is being retained as a back up. I have not tried this idea but when I next take the keel mounting frames off, I will have them machined to take the internal 'O' ring at the outer or keel end. Would it be possible to have a set of spare frames refurbished, fitted with 'O' rings, and available on an exchange basis via the AOA?

I have had the pivot pins made from 316 stainless. I know, I can hear the intake of breath and the tutting, but I am informed by Roger Backhaus (A140) that after two years there has been no deterioration to the stainless pins, clamps and inner washer plates which he fitted to A140. Roger also bronze bushed the tubes and fitted 'O' rings into the face of the clamp nut (see (3)).

New Windows

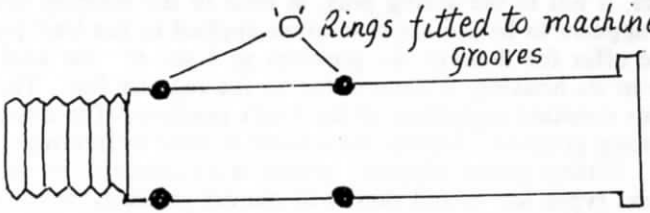
Solvendo's windows were, to say the least, showing their age, and having spent £8 on acrylic polish and hours of arm aching rubbing, I

1.

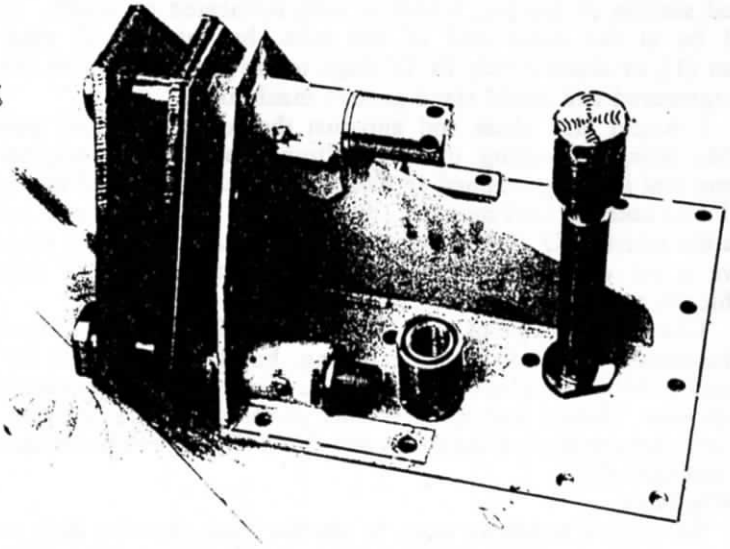

ORIGINAL SEAL
New 'O' ring seal fitted to internal groove

OR

2.


'O' Rings fitted to machined grooves

3



decided to renew them. Boating Monthly's ads were consulted and eventually phone calls were made to several perspex/acrylic window suppliers. Interesting conversations and gloomy outcomes ensued. The curve was the problem, the oval shape was a problem, and I thought the price was a problem. I decided I must have a try and do it myself. A few local enquiries and I bought some 5mm acrylic sheet, enough to make six main windows. What next? A former made by an internal template of the coach roof; wood battens 1" cut from a template. I fixed battens to a base board cover with hardboard held by panel pins. Now I had a mould base. The old windows were used as patterns for the new. You have to copy each one because they are all different. I used a felt spirit pen to mark around the old windows, then a jigsaw was used to cut the new acrylic. It does really work quite easily.

Now for the easy bit. Using a heat gun I warmed the hardboard mould, laid a piece of acrylic on it and clamped one edge down using a thin lath and clamp. I warmed the acrylic by keeping the heat gun moving all the time, and gently pulling the other side of the window down and clamping it into position, all the time keeping it warm. I left each one until next day to cool before releasing. Final trimming of the edges was done by use of a sanding disc fixed onto the drill held in a vice. Be careful; the debris is hot.

Result: new clear windows refitted using Sikaflex under the outside frame only - and a very satisfying jub indeed. Cost: £8 for the acrylic sheet! Do try it. It is easier than you think and easier than polishing. Solvendo also has four smaller windows in the aft cabin, and these were replaced by cutting down the best of the old windows and polishing. Now it looks as if I am shopping for curtains.

PS It is the 40th anniversary for A1, and in early October by pure chance I came across A186 Ilversden, the last Atalanta, and spent a pleasant hour on board nattering Atalantas with Graham Nixon.

PPS Looking forward to another Forum.

LEAKS AND CURES (HOPEFULLY)

By ~~Simon Cooper~~ HIRAN (~~A104~~)

COLIN TWYFORD A95

Hiran had been pestered with leaks in the engine compartment and forward cabin for many years, so in the Autumn of 1992 Janet and I removed the anti-fouling and stripped the underwater section back to the wood. Then three coats of SP resin were applied over all surfaces including inside the keel boxes. Rust was removed from the brackets at the rear of the keel boxes before the metal was treated and painted.

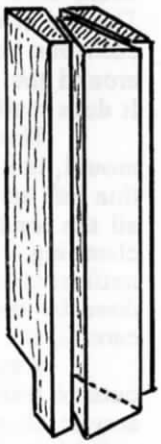
On launching, Hiran took a great deal of water into the engine compartment and cabin. We had no option but to recover her. No sailing for 1993.

The brackets in the boxes were removed revealing badly rotted wood in need of replacing. The end blocks are approximately 14" x 3½"

x 2½", so after removing part of the draining drips to gain access from the cockpit, the end blocks were drilled with a 1" bit and chiselled out from inside underneath the boat.

This revealed that the wood was like charcoal, black completely through. After cleaning up, however, the plywood sides of the boxes were found to be quite sound and the only problem was fitting the end block in firmly without scraping off the adhesive.

I used the following method. The block was cut just about 3/16" wider than the gap between the ply sides, then cut lengthwise with a band-saw to form two side pieces with the centre shaped as a wedge. It was easy to secure the sides with SP and screws from inside the boat; then the centre wedge was coated with SP and hammered home, two long screws top and bottom each side (dowelling could be used) securing it. A strip of ¼" ply was screwed down with mastic on the inside face of each box (belt and braces!). I did not replace the metal brackets.



There still remained the leaks along the hog. The keel strip was removed. It was fixed on with screws (brass) and mastic and came off very easily, maybe too easily. It was clear to see the gaps where water could enter. Once cleaned up SP was forced into any areas that showed delamination, and also into the gaps between the hull sections, which were quite large. A ½" strip of mahogany was screwed and glued up in three sections along the length of the boat (scarfed on joins) and a further 3/8" thick strip was glued on top, overlapping previous joins.

Replacing the keel was not such a daunting task. Some of the skin fittings into the engine need investigation and there is a seepage from the front end of the port keel box. Another project for the winter months.

LETTERS AND BOOKS

15 August 1994

Dear Vice Chairman and Rear Commodore

Thank you for organising, and the Association for inviting us, and the many members from the Eastern Counties for attending, the first experimental Regatta Supper at West Mersea, where my wife and I were proud to be the guests of the Association.

We enjoyed an excellent dinner, saw the fireworks for the first time for about 20 years, and met many old Atalanta skippers and crews on their own ground.

Thank you all very much

Yours sincerely

W Odling

15 May 1994

Dear Colin

We recently returned from a very successful cruise to Holland - via Ijmuiden, Amsterdam, Maarkameer, Ijsselmeer, Vlieland and Terschelling - but did suffer from some rig damage on the way across. I thought I had better write describing the problem - it might be something which is already well known as a potential fault, but if not you might feel that it would be a good idea to alert owners so they can keep an eye open for it.

Arosa has a masthead rig, and one of the top spreaders folded backwards. The spreader fits into a brass socket which is brazed to the brass mast shoe which also supports the tops of the main shrouds. Because the top spreaders are swept back there is a backwards bending load on them as well as an axial load. A crack had occurred around the forward side of the brazing of the socket to the mast shoe which had allowed the socket and spreader to fold back. We also found a crack on the opposite side of the mast shoe. It would be a good idea for owners to inspect the brazing of the spreader sockets to the mast shoe regularly.

We were very fortunate in getting the fitting repaired very expeditiously when we got to Amsterdam. (Apparently the phrase to describe the problem in Dutch is, "Der top spreader is gebroken"!)

Yours sincerely
Simon Cooper AROSA (A104)

"Rescue From The Skies" by Stephen Brewster Daniels.
Published by HMSO at £25.00.

A brief review by Jane Stearn reads;

"After twelve years of research, we have the story of the airborne lifeboats in which Uffa Fox played a large part. It was his expertise which produced a boat that was light enough to be carried under an aircraft, yet strong enough to be dropped at 25 mph into the sea without disintegrating, a concept he carried forward into the Atalanta design. The origins and development of the lifeboats is fully documented and details of the 113 times they were dropped are given. Hundreds of lives were saved."