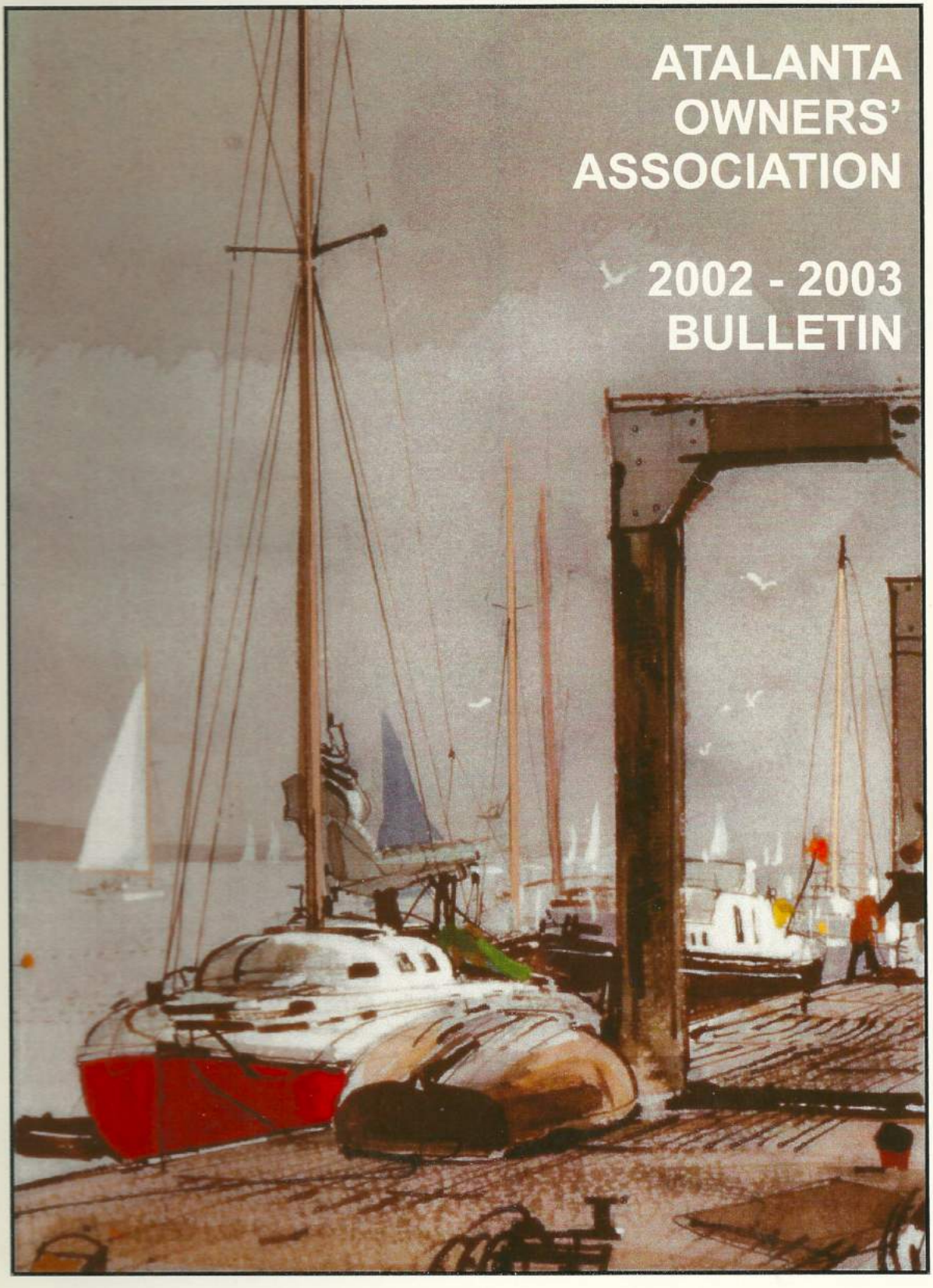
ATALANTA
OWNERS'
ASSOCIATION
2002 - 2003
BULLETIN

ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

2002 – 2003 BULLETIN

44th Edition

Contents

Front cover and insert – painting by Roland Hilder; see article on page

Inside front cover – cockpit covers on A168 "Kookaburra"; details from Norman Dorrington

Inside back cover – "Frisk" (photographs by Beken); see article on page

Back cover – A162 "Solone"; near Pte de Saint Mathieu, Chenel du Four

COMMITTEE 2002 – 2003

Patron	**Charles Currey**
Commodore	**Fred Boothman**
Vice Commodore	**John Searle**
Hon. Secretary	**Colin Twyford**
Hon Editor	**Mike Dixon**
Hon Auditor	**Monica Mourant**
Committee	**Simon Cooper**
	Peter Davies
	Maurice Donovan **Drawings Master**
	Norman Dorrington
	Charles Hammond
	Adrian Rivett **Engines**
	Jane Stearn

From the Commodore

I shan't be sad to see the back if this year's sailing season. The weather gave us a right run a round, heavy wind and rain when forecast sun, and sun (of sorts) when forecast rain. A glorious Indian summer however forgave all. An interesting report was contained in the recent autumn newsletter.

Apparently our Hon. Sec. has been approached by people considering building an Atalanta from scratch! This has got the imagination running regarding the possibilities and impossibilities of such an ambitious project, for one the cost of reproducing the Atalanta's keel mechanism would be horrendous. However Colin (Hon Sec.) tells me he is exploring the idea of a storage facility for Atalanta bit and pieces. Hitherto, abandoned boats have been burned or broken up and scrapped.

I myself am unwilling to dump a pair of Atalanta keels having buried them in a field in the Welsh borders, to be reclaimed some day in the future by an Atalanta owner keen to complete a rebuild or even a member from "time team" (iron age of course). Here's to an excellent sailing season for 2003.

Fred Boothman

Editorial

I write this after the 2003 dinner at the St Ermine's. The reasons for the delay are many – moving house in early December and working on the boat, but mostly because our (very reasonably priced) printer decided to shut up shop for the best part of four weeks over Christmas.

However, I think you'll agree it's worth the wait. The front cover detail and the A4 copy insert of Roland Hilder's painting are superb, and we're extremely grateful to his daughter Mary for making them available to us. No one has yet identified the red-hulled Atalanta alongside Fairey Marine's pontoon – have you any clues?

The logs and articles are an exotic mix and I hope you enjoy reading them. For the first time, I have had to restrict the number of articles, so I already have a start for next year. But that doesn't mean you can rest on your laurels. Of particular interest are articles concerning improvements and modifications as well as how members managed to overcome problems though lateral thinking and ingenuity.

Have an excellent season.

Mike Dixon

Roland Hilder

Maritime Artist

By his daughter Mary Klose

Rowland Hilder was born in Great Neck, Long Island in America in 1905. His parents were newly arrived immigrants whose family roots went generations deep into the soil of Kent. The connection with England was however never lost. Rowland's father's work brought them back each year on one or other of the great transatlantic liners. Until the family finally returned to the UK in 1915, Rowland's summers were spent with grandparents in Birling in Kent. It is tempting to see two of the great themes of his career in these early experiences, the sea and the landscape of his native county.

Rowland's father settled the family in a sweet and tobacconist's shop in New Cross and went to fight in the Great War. Rowland himself struggled through a generally unhappy school career. His early gifts as a draughtsman were however recognised and encouraged by Smith Collins, the art teacher, whose kindliness helped settle Rowland (and his parents) on the direction of his life should take.

Rowland joined Goldsmith's college in 1921. In parallel with his formal studies, Rowland spent much of his time drawing on the waterfront of the River Thames, at that time in its heyday as a working river. He began to produce the first of a number of little known but quite fabulous drawings, in which observation, subtle formal organisation and extraordinarily skilful and sensitive draughtsmanship are combined.

He made several voyages to the Low Countries and signed on as a purser on North Sea steamers. At that time it must have seemed an absolute certainty that his future was to be a marine artist. Rowland's gifts however were far too varied for that, and by degrees his career took him into book illustration, then, to survive economically, to commercial art. Eventually he was able to devote himself to the marine and landscape painting that made his name a byword.

To a certain and never very complete extent you could take boats out of the artist but you could never take the artist out of boats. The first boat he owned was a flat-bottomed vessel he referred to as the punt. In it he explored the Thames, Medway and Swale producing many of the drawings that later became well-known paintings and etchings. By the 1960's Rowland owned a 26 ft Atalanta "Julietta". The painting shown was done in her cockpit as she sat at her berth at Fairey Marine on the Hamble, sometime in the 60's.

He sailed in her with various family members until he was in his late seventies, retaining an uncanny eye for weather and sea. "Julietta" was sold to a new owner in 1997.

From Atlantic crossings in the "Lusitania" to voyages in "Julietta", sea, wind, sky and earth informed every mark that Rowland Hilder made in his long career as an artist.

It Never Rains...

Simon Cooper

A104 "Arosa"

It was pitch dark, windless and the rain was coming down like stair-rods - but it was beautiful, for as each drop hit the surface of the sea, it generated an instantaneous spark of phosphorescence so that the entire area around the boat sparkled and shimmered.

"Arosa" was becalmed in the early hours of the morning, on the way back to Yorkshire after attending the 2000 annual Atalanta gathering at West Mersea. We (my brother David and I) had slipped in a dead calm late the previous evening, feeling our way out without the echo sounder which had packed up a couple of weeks before, and managing to miss the unlit Bench Head buoy off the eastern end of Mersea Island. We were two miles off Clacton when the engine's low oil pressure warning went off. The engine was immediately

stopped and it didn't take long to establish that the oil was in the bilge instead of the sump.

When daylight came we were still becalmed off Clacton, but the rain had stopped. An inspection of the engine showed that the oil had escaped from a corroded oil pipe passing under the engine between the oil pump and the filter. Cutting the unions off the ends of the pipe and connecting them with a piece of plastic tube and jubilee clips made a temporary repair. Although this arrangement still leaked it did give some limited use of the engine. Being now in need of more engine oil we motored into Clacton beach, using the lead to guide us and anchored in one and a half fathoms.

I paddled ashore in the rubber dinghy, and was directed to the nearest motor shop by a helpful gent in the resort's information centre. By the time I returned a light wind had developed, and we hoisted sail and weighed at about midday. We made good progress up the Suffolk coast until the following wind dropped and the tide became foul approaching Lowestoft at around 6am the following morning. Rolling in the slop, the jib boom succeeded in detaching itself and disappeared overboard. Brief use was made of the engine to get inshore out of the tide; the wind slowly picked up, the tide turned and we started to make progress again. By midday we were departing from the Norfolk coast across the Wash. To while away the afternoon, I got out the hand-held RDF to see what it would pick up. Although all the marine beacons had, of course, been closed down, I thought that perhaps one could find aero beacons. All I could get, however, were a number of radio stations, including Radio Four. There followed a discussion on whether it would be possible to use these stations to provide an alternative navigation system to GPS.

The breeze held up nicely enabling us to cross the shipping lane (running SE from the Humber) in good order. For once the North Sea Ferry (running to Rotterdam), which in the past has seemed strangely attracted to "Arosa", passed a good mile from us. We sailed into fog in the early hours of the morning, and then the battery, having no engine to sustain it, expired, dowsing the navigation and compass lights. Later, as it got light, we heard the Inner Dowsing horn away to port which gave a vague clue to our position.

During the morning the SE wind increased to force 6 accompanied by a lumpy sea and we started to see guillemots and gannets. The experimentations with the RDF bore unexpected fruit, as we were able to use it to receive the shipping forecast.

Towards evening the wind moderated and we altered course parallel to the coast, not wishing to run into Flamborough Head. By about 8 in the evening visibility improved and we turned westwards to close the coast, sighting the lights of a town about mid-night. Much discussion ensued and we eventually concluded (correctly as it turned out) that it was Scarborough. Our destination was Hartlepool, so we turned north.

Daybreak found us 4 miles north of Scarborough with a foul tide and a light north wind. Over breakfast we decided to cut our losses and make for Scarborough, arriving off the harbour entrance at about low tide (10 am). There being only inches of water in the entrance to the yacht harbour we hauled up the keels and glided in until we came gently to rest on the sandy bottom between the pier heads (much to the consternation of the harbour master, who, as we approached, was to be seen on the pier jumping up and down and waving his arms, apparently fearing a terrible shipwreck). While we waited for the tide to make we brewed up and rigged lines ashore (and mollified the harbour master), and, as we floated, warped into the harbour and moored alongside the wall, 3½ days after leaving West Mersea, sans echo sounder, engine, jib boom, radio, navigation lights.

A fortnight later, having fixed the engine, I completed the trip, making a 12-hour passage to Hartlepool.

25 years at Fairey Marine

Memories from Alan Burnard

I joined Fairey Marine during 1957 when the 26 foot Atalanta was well and truly in production so I had no direct input to the design. The boat has Uffa Fox's name and he certainly designed the hull and rig. The concept of the twin retractable ballast keels came from Alan Vines, the production director of Fairey Aviation. He was a director of Fairey Marine but we only saw him at weekends when he came down from Richmond to go sailing. He had a very inventive and constructive mind and the first ever ballast keel with the aerofoil section was milled out under a massive milling machine from a solid lump of steel. This was done at the Fairey Aviation factory at Hayes in Middlesex. I do not think it was ever fitted to a boat but it spent most of its days hung from a steel pillar in the machine shop at Hamble, and on to it they attached the screw raising mechanism for testing the Atalanta raising and lowering screw jacks. From an economic viewpoint it was far less expensive to cast the keel in iron. If my memory serves me correctly they each weighed 5 cwts.

The concept of hanging everything from the main cabin bulkhead was very clever. With the mast sitting on the top and the shrouds attached at the sides all the stresses were centred on the bulkhead. Also praiseworthy was that the keel hinge bolts only penetrated through one side of the keel boxes. As you all know the weight was clamped on one side only.

As the Atalantas were built in an aircraft factory with aircraft type drawings, every nut and bolt was detailed. The register of drawings, which we held in the drawing office, listed no less than 600 drawings. This must be the world's first for a 26 foot boat.

In the boat's list I see a boat called "AKU" *(A113 Ed.)*. I think we built her for a Mr Pack who was going to sail round the world. He had the boat totally sheathed with fibreglass. The engine we fitted was a rather large Lister air-cooled diesel so we had to devise large air trunks to get air in and out. The sad side of the story is that Peck got as far as the Galapagos Islands and was struck down with a bug so his journey came to an abrupt end. This might not be correct but I think a large cargo boat eventually took the hull to a South American port.

The Atalanta 31 was a larger concept and I was involved with several design features. The ballast keel idea was retained but being much heavier they needed hydraulics with a pump running from the engine to raise and lower. One day a hydraulic hose burst filing the cabin with oil. Very messy.

The Titania was intended to be more of a motor sailor with raised freeboard and a more powerful engine.

Alan Vines wanted a small version of and Atalana using one retractable keel. I was involved with the design. The hull was restricted to 20 feet but the one ballast keel had to be heavier. The instruction we received was to use the Atalanta's curved cabin top. I do not remember how many Fulmars we built but she proved to be quite successful. There was hardly room for an inboard engine so a removable outboard seemed preferable.

My forte was the power boats. I have written many articles for the Fairey Marine Power Boats. I was very pleased to see that the Atalanta owners have a club and magazine and to see the name of Bob Young. He spent very many years in the drawing office with Fairey Aviation/Marine. His input to the 600 drawings previously mentioned was very considerable. Every other drawing had the name AE Young in the margin. He was my chief Draughtsman and I could always rely on his support 100% which made my job much easier. I spent 25 years at Fairey Marine and looking back, they were wonderful days working with a totally dedicated team.

I am still working on the Fairey Marine Hamble site where I have my own consultancy office. I am semi-retired but like to keep in touch with everyone and to help Fairey Owners to keep their boats afloat and giving good service

.

A virgin's tale.

Grahame Hill

A65 "Joann"

For the past 30 odd years I have been sailing dinghies and moving steadily towards less whiz-and-swim and more interest. My last dinghy was a Wivenhoe One Design, a local clinker boat built in 1935, which I sold to buy "Joann". There is only so much fun you can have with a paintbrush in February.

I bought "Joann" in August 2001. You know the scenario, sailing club bar, exchanging stories of daring do, and moving on to dreams of untold wealth and opportunity. The conversation turned to cruising. "One day," I said wistfully, "When the finances allow, I quite fancy a cruiser, about 26ft, which takes the ground, about 4 berth etc." One of the members chipped in with a tone that carried far more meaning than the words. "How serious are you?" he enquired, "I have a reason for asking".

The following afternoon, curiosity got the better of me. I found myself driving through the countryside looking for Park Farm. There she was, in the barn, under a year's worth of potato dust. My first impressions tended to link old lifeboats, jelly moulds and Ford Sierras. I climbed aboard and the evocative smell of old paint, wood and diesel got to me. I left after a couple of hours of investigative prodding and having contorted my generous frame into positions that the state circus would have been proud of.

The head and heart argued all night, eventually the heart won and I found myself handing over a cheque, organising bill of sale, surveys, registry and all the other chores that make boat purchase such a delight. The winter dragged, sanding discs fell like snowflakes, paint & varnish flowed and yet another pair of overalls was banished from the washing machine.

Easter 2002 arrived early and arrangements were made to give the barnacles a chance to stick to my nice new antifouling. I sent off my application for the race. Thoughts about having 5 months to learn about cruisers not sitting up when you go for the high side, Mersea is only round the corner and it would be interesting to see some of the others drove my pen.

August arrives, the race is on Saturday. The tides are wrong and Canute springs to mind. Alex, my son and first class racing crew (even parents grovel sometimes) has to finish his paper round on Friday evening and I do not fancy getting through the moorings in the dark. Alresford Creek has a wonderful layout arising from a combination of a wandering channel and "This looks like a good place to dig a mooring / float a cradle". Finally a compromise, youngest son can have a trip to the club. I leave the mooring on the ebb, keels up, rudder up - the withies are still wet. I know I can get out of the creek but does the mud know it?

Friday night moored on the club pontoon at Wivenhoe. Alex arrives and I inform him that we have to leave on the ebb about 3am. Alex starts the adolescent debate about whether 3am exists. I suggest that the chippy and the club are open so it would be a shame not to use them. The debate finished. The inner men being satisfied, I set the alarm suspecting 3am would remain a mystery to my son.

The alarm went off, I dressed, made tea, started the diesel and slipped the lines. The adolescent sleeps the sleep of the just and 3am is still a mystery. I set sail with a fair wind and we cruise down the Colne and into the Blackwater. As we approach Bradwell with time to spare I start cooking breakfast. Moments later came a voice from the depths enquiring as to time and place.

The race starts at 10 so I pick up a buoy and wait. A procession of smacks and other craft of all sizes and vintages pass by. Finally I see another Atalanta, "Bluster" which I saw briefly just as we were setting off for Ostend. We drop the mooring and head out to the line. The VHF traffic suggested that the course would be number 4 so I duly note it down in an easy to read format. I hasten to add that I can cope with the digit on its own, but remembering all those buoys is a bit of a hassle.

We get to the line to find it is course 3. Frantic jotting and book juggling gets us the first marks. Hope there is someone faster to show us the way, the marks do not have numbers and positions are approximate. Dinghies and cruisers all jostle for position, I just want to start without hitting anything. The gun goes and so does the wind, "Bluster" is off to a good start and "Kookaburra" second; I follow on. "Bluster" shows us a clean pair of heels on the first leg. I start to play with the sails, which usually means we go slower. The bits of wool

threaten to look like the pictures in the books. "Joann" goes faster. Gradually we creep up on "Bluster". "Kookaburra" starts to slip behind and I ponder the handicapping, my genoa vs. her jib. On the third leg I finally caught up with "Bluster". The cry comes over the water, "Turn your engine off" I politely confirm that I did not have the engine on. I assumed this was a comment based on catching up so soon. I was soon enlightened. "Take the ensign off they will disqualify you". Shades of send three and fourpence. I shouted my thanks then launched myself onto the after deck to wrestle with the staff, ensign variety. I did not want to be disqualified after the tribulations of getting here.

The wind continued to die down; my deep-water course seemed to have more wind so I drew ahead. The three Atalantas then closed up again. The wind such as it was, seemed to be everywhere else. "Bluster" drew ahead but on a very different course. She would have to tack and head up. "Kookaburra" drifts purposefully on a parallel course. Sails go from dead run to close-hauled and courses were equally variable when enough water passed the rudder. At this point Alex like something from the 'Little Shop of Horrors' chirps up "Feed Me!". Even the tell tales hung limp, a sirocco was hoped for but a risotto appeared.

Eventually all three boats sit becalmed within hailing distance. The next mark is getting further away as the tide flows. A decision is made to jointly retire. Engines started we return to West Mersea. I hook up to a buoy only to be informed that it would be needed later. I am directed to a buoy at the far end of Salcot Channel. We got the water taxi to the hard just in time to be told the last run will be at 5-15. The thought of being stranded made up our minds. If we get back to the boat at least we have somewhere to sleep. The possibility of using the inflatable is soon discounted as we watch the current whip past. I'm good at rowing but not that good. Frantic phone calls to send apologies for missing the evening do. Eventually as the light slips away we are rewarded with the end of regatta firework show. The distance however added a new dimension, like a badly dubbed film we saw the display, heard the bang and then the echo. A few cans later and I too would wonder if 3am ever existed.

On Sunday we meet up with others from the club for a picnic at Osea Island before returning. As a glass of Pinotage gently forces its way past my lips I muse, next time will be more organised and I will have an outboard with me.

A little while later Colin Twyford rang and informed me that I had a jubilee plate to collect as a result of the race. I am pleased to say that it now holds pride of place, a reminder of a pleasant weekend. Next time pre order a large cod & chips for two, I hope to meet up with a few more of you next year.

West Mersea 2002

Jane Stearn

A183 "Bluster"

Entries were down this year, but it is still a great day. Three things were missing; a larger entry, the get-together at the club on Friday night because the sailing instructions are now published in the programme and do not need to be collected, and wind. The Friday evening "I'm no good at all" session did not materialise. Out on the water next day you could spot the truthful and those more economical! "Bluster's" delivery crew enjoyed a jar with Rick of "Blue Belle", the winner in 2001. Of "Bluster's" racing crew, one broke his finger, one nearly broke his knee and one was sick. Who, if anyone, would turn up on Saturday morning? Rick had brought "Blue Belle" in single-handed and was also hopeful a crew would materialise. All this is nail-biting stuff as I was determined to push boat and crew harder this year to make "Bluster" a force to be reckoned with again.

Saturday dawned quietly but with enough wind to make a race. Out on the start line we identified "Joann" and "Kookaburra" but no sign of "Blue Belle" or "Hiran". "Bluster" had a perfect start, her best ever, so morale was high. In the end I had friend Kevin and his 14 year old son Gareth and I could not have wished for better. "Joann" was behind,

followed by "Kookaburra". Euphoria lasted all of 15 minutes. After rounding no. 3 mark on the Tollesbury side, it was obvious we were being caught up. Past the power station we very kindly pointed out to "Joann" that flying her ensign could lead to nasty consequences. They thought I said 'engine' and were accusing them of malpractice or at least commenting on their enviable turn of speed, but they cottoned on. For this selfless act in aiding our closest rival, of which Gareth strongly disapproved, they promptly overhauled and passed us. Heigh-ho.

To rectify this we decided to sail inshore which paid off nicely until we ran aground. Quickly afloat again, "Bluster" did actually catch up again but "Joann" drew away once more. All the way down this long leg "Bluster" would normally have been flying her spinnaker, the ideal sail for the prevailing winds. So why not? What a misguided idea to have it converted to a cruising chute, a comparatively useless sail.

The tide was still making and "Bluster" was well placed to round no. 10 mark, out by the Bench Head when the wind died away. With only about two cables to go we began to make sternway so down went the anchor. "Joann", further into the tide, retreated rapidly; Gareth in a state of glee. "Kookaburra", who had caught us up somewhat, also retreated but soon anchored too. After a while a zephyr came along and the tide turned. "Bluster's" commanding lead as "Joann", still in the stronger tide, returned. We made sail again but had practically no steerage way. Stalemate.

I tried the committee boat to see if they were going to put Plan B into operation, but no reply. So reluctantly we all decided retirement was the only option. Of course, on the way back the wind returned and from the opposite direction, a spinnaker run both ways. Sod had two good bites at his law that day.

Why were there only three boats in the race? Poor old "Blue Belle" had engine trouble and was thirty-five minutes late at the start, set out, but decided they could not catch up and retired. "Hiran" was so reluctant to leave home she would not even accept the ignition key.

We had the usual great evening in Margaret Odling's barn, unfortunately missed by "Joann's" crew whom we were particularly keen to have with us, as they are the new owners. Then followed extra special Jubilee fireworks. The yacht club generously let us keep the trophies so we drew lots for them.

All you Atalantas within striking distance of West Mersea, you missed a treat by not coming. See you all next year.

An article based on the talk given at the 2002 dinner

Robin Bryer

"Frisk" (Hull A79)

"Frisk" is a half sister to an Atalanta. Externally, from rubbing strake to keel, she is the product of Fairey Marine and Uffa Fox. Above, below and inside, she is the product of my father, Peter Bryer. He flew aircraft off battleship gun turrets in the First World War and became a founder member of the Royal Air Force in 1918. Though at one time a fighter pilot on the northwest frontier of India, the majority of his career was involved with the first aircraft carrier and then with seaplanes until his final appointment, in charge of air-sea rescue. In this capacity he was involved with Uffa Fox and the airborne lifeboat, from which the Atalanta largely derives.

Insofar as anyone did remember a night with Uffa, he recalled nights spent with him at his home on the Isle of Wight as a pleasant diversion from normal wartime duties.

My father was to retain a respect for Uffa's ability to design sea-kindly vessels and also for moulded plywood as a method of construction.

In retirement, he largely designed and built a steel 16-ton cutter. Then, with the advent of the Atalanta, he turned his mind to adapting it for his own purposes. As a qualified aircraft

designer, he rightly considered himself reasonably well qualified to design boats likewise. Had not, indeed, he and Uffa explored the affinity between air and sea with the airborne lifeboat project and had not most of his career been involved with landing on and taking off from water? Pushing a hull through it was just an extension of the principles with which he was already familiar.

One might have thought that he would have embraced the Atalanta, rather than seeking to change it. However, my father's dictum in life was that the wheel was there for re-inventing.

Strengthening of the bilge was carried out while it was still inverted, as was construction of the timber part of the keel. This was of strip construction, chubby at the forward end and tapering to the stern, in a manner reminiscent of an aircraft's wing. The forward end was hollow, to accommodate the anchor chain, my father being anxious to keep weight as low down as possible. The stern section was formed by a bronze water cooling tank for the engine, my father being anxious to have as few holes in the hull as possible preferring an internal water cooling system rather than one using sea water.

Some two years into the project, we moved house, boat and all. In her new home, she was now the right way up and my father started working on internal accommodation and decking. Some three years later she was launched at Lymington in 1963, as Lloyd's Register reminds me. Those looking her up will see that my father's name is given as GM Bryer, his true initials, though he was universally known as Peter.

She was subsequently to be the family's faithful cruising boat right up until the present day, though she is currently 'resting'. Her furthest north (so far) is Inverness, her furthest east Paris, furthest south La Rochelle and furthest west the Blasket Islands.

How is "Frisk" laid out?

Imagine yourself climbing over the transom. You would be stepping onto a large after deck enclosed with bulwarks of about a foot in depth. Beneath this you would find a substantial after locker. You would pull the dinghy up behind you on a launching ramp with a roller at its aft end, which doubles as a swimming ladder when bolted to the side of the boat. My father was always anxious to make everything do at least two jobs.

Moving forward you come to the cockpit, which, initially, like the Atalanta, had a whipstaff at its after end, but was subsequently replaced by a wheel. The whipstaff is obviously important in the Atalanta so as to give access to the aft cabin, but in "Frisk" there was no such need, so the wheel proved in time to be more appropriate.

On either side of the cockpit you would find varnished slatted seats, moulded to the human bottom, freely draining to the cockpit's self-draining floor.

The cockpit coaming is raked, rather than upright, as is the bulkhead leading to the cabin, so wherever you sit, you have a comfortable position for your back.

The engine, initially a Stuart Turner and subsequently a Bukh, is below a half step – a warm place to sit when it is running.

You enter the cabin down steps over the forward end of the engine. To port and starboard are quarter berths extending under cockpit seats. Forward of these, to port is the galley with a fully gimballed stove and, to starboard, the hanging locker with a post at the after end of both giving a firm hand hold, together with horizontal rails above them, running the length of the dog house, which came out of the "Queen Mary" in her first peace time refit. (Part of the steering gear came form a Southampton tram – my father being resourceful in finding parts).

The doghouse only covers the central part of the vessel, flanking sections to port and starboard being covered by a lower coach roof built out to side decks providing no more than a foothold.

At this point you duck as you enter the saloon. Here to port and starboard are two dinettes (ghastly word derived from the world of caravans). These can seat four people at two tables without the gangway becoming obstructed. At night the seats and tables can be dismantled and transformed into two berths, making four berths in all.

Forward again, through double doors, you come to the 'cat' house where you can again stand up, with the WC under the coach roof to port and washbasin under the coach roof to starboard. The sloping bulkhead at the forward end of this compartment has a circular hatch in it, through which you can rest your

elbows of the fore deck. Immediately below the hatch is another circular opening leading into the sail locker in the forepeak, beneath the fore deck. The fore deck itself is flanked by bulwarks, rising to the stem, slightly deeper than those flanking the after deck.

Apart from being a comfortable place to stand in some shelter looking forward of the vessel, it is also a very good place to back-up someone standing on the fore deck pulling in the anchor chain at some 45° to the stem head.

The mast is exactly the same length as the boat, handy for deck stowage when going through canals. It is mounted at precisely the centre of the boat, on the forward end of the doghouse. This provides a small mainsail, seldom in need of reefing and a large fore triangle, including a jib and a staysail, making her a stem headed cutter.

My father argued that foresails are far more efficient than is a mainsail, not having the turbulence caused by a mast, even ours, made by one of his wartime pilots, Ian Proctor, of aluminium with internal halyards. However, the arrangement removes the capability of being able to manoeuvre under mainsail alone, something I value in my other boat, a 1934 sloop designed by Watson.

The overall impression is one of a boat that is far larger than she actually is. You can sit in comfort and safety both on the fore and after decks. The cockpit is large and comfortable. The passage through the cabin to the fore deck is unobstructed. She has the appearance of an under canvassed heavy displacement vessel, but her sail plan is in fact quite adequate for her light displacement, albeit not as light as that of her half sister the Atalanta.

Some of my father's more ingenious design features have had the disadvantage of trapping water leading to rot; she does not have the Atalanta's ability to shed it as if off a duck's back. This I must address as and when time and money permit. My father, who gave up sailing at the age of 82 and living altogether at 98, would probably regard such effort as being a waste of time and money, but since it is his energy and not mine which created her, it is a vies which he would be entitled to take, but from which I must differ.

Meanwhile she well deserves her rest in the A frame shed which I have specially constructed for her at home in Dorset. If any member would be interested in helping me stir her from her sleep, I should of course be very happy to hear from them.

A long weekend

Mick Le Maitre

A138 "Sweet Sue"

Thursday 11th July

Finished work at 4 pm, home for a shower and packed last bits into a bag. Loaded up car and headed for St Sampson's harbour. Walked to "Sweet Sue" dragging the dinghy. 15 minutes later we were afloat, pushed her astern off fore and aft moorings with a boat hook – don't need a rope round the prop now. Moved alongside lay-by pontoon where John joined me, where we loaded our bags.
1745; underway for Longy Bay, Alderney, no wind just mainsail up. Arrived Longy Bay at 2045. Dinner is all prepared – very kind of wife, just heat it up and open a bottle of wine. Set the alarm and turn in.

Friday 12th July

Alarm goes off at 0600. Time for breakfast – orange juice, toast and marmalade and coffee. 0630 engine running, anchor up and making way very carefully, we give the Brimtides plenty of sea room. Tide is already moving at 3 knots, wind east or northeast force one to two, so only mainsail up. Cleared Alderney, course 036M. Using GPS to plot position on chart every hour. John and I find this to be the best way and it's very interesting to see the crosses on the chart showing how the tide is pushing us. Changed course to keep outside the 2-mile zone round the Mid Channel buoy. Back on course, but 2½ miles past the buoy we have to give way to a passenger ferry. Time for lunch. Gave way to another ship. Progress

is slow now that the tide has changed – only making 3 knots over the ground. Getting closer to the Isle of Wight, changed to a larger scale chart and altered to 006M. 2000, dropped anchor in Shanklin Bay, depth 7.2 metres, 20 metres chain out.

Saturday 13th July

1015; John pulled up the anchor and we motored along the coast with mainsail up and after clearing Bembridge Ledge, turned off the engine and set the genoa. We arrived off Chichester Bar – no sign of other Atalanta's. We drifted around with just the mainsail up and had lunch.

After lunch we started to creep in under the main with the flood tide. We saw the other Atalanta's coming out so turned around and started the engine. Charles on "Walrus" shouted instructions at us to follow and keep close inshore as we were taking the inshore passage. ½ mile clear of the bar, the engine was off and the genoa up. "Sweet Sue" took the lead and forged ahead. As we got closer to Cowes, the wind increased all the time and we were spilling the wind from the main in gusts. We were just outside Cowes and had tacked when two large waves stopped our forward speed. "Sweet Sue" just went over on to her beam ends; let the mainsail fly and bore away at the same time and we were back upright. Everything that had been loose on the port side of the boat was now on the starboard side. I should have put a reef in the genoa.

We had arrived in Cowes; the sails were stowed and we motored up to the Folly Inn. Charles had reserved some pontoon berths for us. A60 "Achates", Johnathon and Fiona, A150 "Salizanda II", Eric and William were waiting for us. Then A119 "Walrus", Charles and Tim arrived, followed by A165 "Sloeberry", Johnathon and crew, A15 "Artemis II", Joe and Michelle and finally A31/6 "Psalm" with Mike, Sue and the family.

We all went ashore for a meal but the bar was very crowded and the queue very long. John, Joe, Michelle and I went back aboard "Sweet Sue" for a meal. Food was clubbed together; John cooked and did us proud. The others returned later, some turned in and the rest went on board "Walrus"

Sunday 14th July

1000; Charles asked for a tow and we managed to tow at 3½ knots. The race was to be along the coast of the Isle of Wight. Off Cowes there was no wind so we headed across towards Chichester. "Walrus" started her engine, but we kept the towrope rigged in case it failed. We passed Horse Sand Fort, the wind picked up and we cast off the towrope. We arrived first at the East Head and waited for "Walrus" to arrive.

Only two boats were racing, "Sweet Sue" and "Walrus". After receiving race instructions, we managed to steal their wind and go ahead. The wind was astern so we poled out the genoa. John was working very hard trimming the sails and nipping down below to look at the chart. Then back on deck to gybe the genoa. We didn't know where the finishing line was and as the Currey's forgot to blow the horn, we kept going right up to Dell Quay.

We dropped the sails and motored back looking out for the Currey's. The scenery was lovely and well worth our trip up there – a nice looking pub which needs further investigation. We moored alongside another Atalanta and phoned the Currey's who came out and picked us up in the dinghy. We enjoyed a late lunch but soon it was time to say our farewells. Joe and Michelle gave us a lift in their tender. Charles reckoned we would have enough water at the bar so we set off for the Isle of Wight.

At the bar the waves were four feet and if other boats were not coming in I don't know if I would have gone out. Unfortunately, the fore hatch was slightly open and John's oilskins got wet. Passing the Nab channel there were a few big ships around and we had to give way to a ferry outside of Bembridge Ledge. Arrived at the anchorage at 2120. There were about 100 people on the beach – were they fossil hunting? There was a little swell coming in, but "Sweet Sue" was keeping her stern to it. John prepared supper and I worked out the tides for tomorrow – bad news, an 0330 start. I inflated the dinghy as I needed it to clear some weed from the prop – I just managed to reach it by lying down in the dinghy. After dinner we have a chat about the day's events. It's midnight and John turns in. I finish putting the dingy away, check the oil and water levels in the engines, do the dishes, set the alarm and turn in.

Monday 15th July

0330; alarm goes off. Hit the snooze button for 8 minutes of peace. Glass of orange juice, start the engine and heave up the anchor. It's 0350. Cleared the bay and put the mainsail up.

Very light winds. We would put the genoa up only for the wind to drop and the genoa back down again. It was like that all the way to Alderney – boring and hard work. What was interesting was two large trimarans gliding past – where were they getting their wind from? The wind picked up as we entered the race of Alderney, though nearly on the nose from the southwest. Hoist the genoa again but keep the engine on, as we need the speed before the tide turns against us. Checked the chart – there's enough water on the Banc de la Schole so we go straight over it. We tack to clear Bec du Nez and with the genoa down head straight across Big Russel. In between Herm and Jethou and up the Corbette passage, on to St Sampson's harbour where we arrive at 2132.

Race results 1st "Sweet Sue"
2nd "Walrus"

Dinghy repair

Tom Lawton

(A179 "Emma Duck")

On bringing the dinghy home for a spruce up, I noticed that the skin was coming away from the transom, at the turn of the bilge, both sides, to the extent that I could see daylight. On close inspection I saw that over the years, more and more screws, annular nails and tacks had been inflicted on the skin around there to try to keep it on. There wasn't really room to add any more- and I could see it wasn't going to do any good, as they were generally starting to pull through the skin, which was intent on lifting. They all had to go; what was needed was a good glued joint to the transom, as Fairey intended. It then became clear why the screws were there without a boat builder's shed, where one could apply pressure with a jack from the rafters on the upturned shell, there was no way to apply enough force to close the gap.

Now this really needs a sketch! There was no clamp (or cramp?) I owned that could be applied to the area, so I had to make one. First, with the dinghy upside down on a trestle, a 2"x2", about 2'6" long, was clamped to the outside of the transom, near the gunwhale, projecting athwartships about 1' beyond the quarter. An 8mm hole was drilled near the end, in a fore-aft direction, through which a 5' coach bolt passed, forming a pivot for a second 2'6" 2"x2", which hinged down to bear on the turn of the bilge. After a little marking with a pencil, and some rough hacking with a jigsaw, the pivoting piece fitted snugly around the area of interest. A ratchet strap tensioner, down to the transom 2"x2" (or a Spanish windlass if you prefer) enabled a fair force to be brought to bear. The slope of the bottom tends to make the clamp arm try to slide off aft; tying a line from its apex to the bow (I used the painter) helped. Finally, to apply force exactly where it was required, wedges were driven between the clamp bar and the skin, forcing the gap shut. (Could someone please tell me an easy way to make little wedges?!).

Happy that the solution would work, I removed all the old repairs, cleaned out the gap with a hacksaw blade and sandpaper, and mixed some cascamite (now irritatingly called something else!). Glue brushed into the gap, best as I could, a piece of a particularly tough plastic bag laid over the skin to stop the wedges sticking, ratchet tightened, wedges driven in, and hope for the best!

With trepidation the next morning, I slackened off the rig, waiting for the snap-crackle-pop of the skin ripping away from the transom - but no! Success! And not a single screw required. Now of course if the glue does fail in the middle of the river, I suppose I'm in even more trouble, but it looks like a nice repair for now...! ..But only if you're desperate!

Easter Cruise

Dinah Thompson

T10 "Calista"

Good Friday 13th April 2001

The morning was spent at home getting the final tasks done before abandoning the comforts of Rose Cottage for the rigours of "Calista". On the vehicle front Trevor replaced the speedo cable, Alex helped to load the boat and stowed away all the kit. Magnus cleaned out George's (rabbit) hutch. Dinah planted out 1st early and 2nd early potatoes. The duck and hen house were also cleaned.

After a late lunch and delivering the keys to Angela we were ready to depart at 3.40. Leaving the drive however "Calista's" mast heel caught and slightly damaged "Puddleduck's" (Fairey Duckling) transom. Half way across the road we had to stop to re-stow the mast, delaying traffic including a police car.

At 4.00 we were finally leaving on the great Poole expedition. It was soon clear that the speedo was still not working! We had barely got past Neath when, going downhill on the motorway, we were passed at speed by an artic, which left us snaking in its wake. Trevor brought it under control, and much shaken, we continued on our way.

We stopped at the Cardiff east services where Trevor got out the GPS to act as a speedo – after all it works on the boat. Unfortunately, the GPS (being a product of the Fakawe tribe) couldn't work out where we were.

The journey continued taking two hours to the Severn Bridge. We took a slight detour to Cribbs Causeway (Bristol) to fill up the car up with gas. From Bath onwards the journey was even slower. The worst part was the stretch from Warminster to Poole – up and down – with steep hills, bends, and narrow roads. Fortunately, at this time of night there was little traffic.

21.55 and we finally parked up near the boat park at Rockley Sands. It had changed dramatically over the last 25 years.

Saturday 14th April

Trevor and I woke early, and after a mug of tea, Trevor went to find out when we would be able to launch. We moved "Calista" onto the quay and got the mast up very easily. "Puddleduck" was removed from the roof rack with the assistance of some bystanders. A yard tractor was putting a speedboat into the water, and we arranged for them to launch "Calista" off her trailer in the same way when the tide had risen enough.

Just after 10.30 "Calista's" keels touched salt water for the first time in over two years. The engine started easily, but would not engage reverse. We got her safely alongside the pontoon with judicious use of ahead gear, and had a late breakfast. Alex helped fill the water-tanks by container (no hose), The gas bottle ran out, and Alex was left in charge while the rest of us went shopping. We eventually returned with shopping but no gas to find Alex fast asleep. He didn't stir when we left the shopping in the cockpit. We went off in the car to find propane (the blue butane cylinders are no use when it is cold so we use the red ones – and refills are not always easy to locate). The only place was the main Calor dealer – closed until Tuesday.

Back at "Calista" Alex was stirring.

At 5.00 pm we left Rockley. It was pretty windy (W5 or 6). We hoisted the reefed main and turned off the engine in the Rockley channel, as it was overheating. In the Hamworthy moorings we hoisted the working jib, and then reached down the Balls Lake channel. Some close tacking with good teamwork from Alex and Dinah took us up the channel to Shipstal point. There was one boat moored in the channel, and we decided to anchor beyond it. As Dinah prepared the anchor Trevor lost the wind behind the headland and drifted onto the moored boat. No damage to "Nauto" but we caught our outward leaning stanchion on her pulpit, and ripped the stanchion out, damaging the deck. At 6.00 pm we were finally anchored successfully in 4 foot of water.

An inspection of the engine located a kinked hosepipe. There was water under the engine. That on one side was antifreeze from the cooling system overheating, but that on the port was salt. Further investigation located water under the port seats outboard of the keel box and under the trotter box. At least there was no water forward of the main bulkhead, or under the floor between the keels.

Alex slept on his own in the aft cabin. Magnus, who was suffering with a cold, slept in the galley berth. We were all in bed by 10.00.

Easter Sunday 15th April 2001

We awoke to torrential rain, but the wind had died down. After washes all round, the first since leaving home, we cleared away the bedding and had breakfast. Cereals, boiled eggs and hot cross buns. Alex and Trevor washed and dried dishes before Easter eggs were located by Dinah.

The sun came out and the wind picked up. Trevor put the plug and socket together so that the new solar panel could be connected. Trevor then bailed the bilges and looked for leaks.

After lunch Alex, Magnus and Trevor went for a row in "Puddleduck". They tried to land on the beach at Shipstal point, but although the water was only ankle deep, Trevor sank up to his knees in the mud. He returned to "Calista" with wet boots and trousers.

The rest of the afternoon was spent reading or playing cards. Alex, Magnus and Trevor played rummy while Dinah prepared dinner (pasta with a mushroom sauce).
The wind died away and we spent a quiet night mostly aground.

Monday 16th April 2001

We awoke early to a glorious sunny morning with blue skies and a very gentle breeze. Oyster catchers were calling from the beach. Trevor took Magnus for his first sail of the season in his own boat "Puddleduck" while Dinah cooked breakfast (bacon for the carnivores, fried tomatoes, baked beans and scrambled eggs).

After breakfast Trevor cleared up while Alex and Dinah sailed "Puddleduck". After coffee we hoisted "Calista's" sails and attempted to sail through the shallow channel west of Round Island. The water was too shallow even for "Calista", so we turned around and tacked down the channel again and returned to the main channel.

Under main and Genoa we sailed towards Brownsea Island, to the west of Furzey Island and another island before making for the South Deep. The rain, which started as we passed Round Island, cleared away and we enjoyed the occasional holes in the cloud, which allowed the sun to warm us. We had crisps, oatcakes and cheese en route (no bread left) and slowly worked our way up the west side of Brownsea Island against the falling tide. We made the longest tacks that we could, using the keels to let us know when to tack on the outside of the channel. We finally anchored at 15.30.

Magnus was desperate to go ashore so after tea and cake we rowed ashore in "Puddleduck", leaving Alex in charge of "Calista". Alex was deeply involved in a book. Ashore we left our landing fee in the box, dipped our feet in the disinfectant, and marched off to explore. Near the castle we passed an old farm, lots of hens, peacocks and peahens. By the time we reached the quay the last tripping boat had left and the shop was closed (we prefer it that way). We walked slowly back to "Puddleduck" via the Scout camp and were relieved to find that she had not drifted away.

Back on board we discovered that Alex was still reading, but pleased to find that he had dragged himself out of the book for long enough to put new whippings on the ends of the jib sheets as requested.

Dinah prepared dinner while Trevor played with the engine.

Tuesday 17th April 2001

We awoke at 0600 freezing in bed, but the kids seemed warm enough in the aft cabin. There was insufficient power in the battery to run the heating! Starting the engine did not improve matters much since the engine promptly overheated and had to be stopped. The new thermostat seemed to be sticking and was removed later in the morning.

We left mid morning to sail round Brownsea Island and up to Poole Quay. At least the engine would now run for long enough to manoeuvre without overheating. The wind had started off light but steadily increased to force 6 by the time we reached the quay, giving us a splendid sail. We tied up outside a fishing boat on the quay and went ashore shopping. We visited the chandlery and bought Magnus a new lifejacket, Alex new boots, Dinah a splendid brass hurricane lamp and "Calista" a new mainsheet.

We also tried the hardware shop for Calor gas – without success. After stocking up on food and having lunch on the hoof (Cornish pasties

from the local bakers) we returned to "Calista". The harbour master arrived wanting to know how long we would be staying - over 2 hours and you have to go to the new marina.

The forecast was for strong westerly winds overnight so we decided that a night aground in the lee of Shipstal point was again in order. Entering the Balls Lake Channel we managed to lose the channel and put ourselves firmly aground. At least it gave us an opportunity to change to the working jib and put a couple of rolls into the main before lifting the keels and sailing on.

Our first attempt at anchoring beyond the moorings, left us dragging across the channel, so we re-anchored closer to the shore in shallow water and put out lots of chain, and a second anchor. Overnight the wind was strong (at least force 6), first from the west and then from the north. It wasn't the best night's sleep we have had aboard!

Wednesday 18th April 2001

The forecast was for strong Easterlies so we decided to move anchorage. We had a leisurely breakfast while the tide came back in and floated us off the mud. We used the dinghy to recover second anchor, and then took a line out to a vacant buoy. We lifted the anchor and hauled ourselves up to the buoy so that we could sort out ropes and sails. We tacked off and promptly ran aground before we had her sailing properly. Alex hauled the keels up, and we ran off down wind to give him time to lower both keels fully down. This time we managed, with some good teamwork and with lots of short tacks, we were able to tack our way successfully out of the channel, without hitting anything or running aground again.

Alex took the helm to sail through the Balls Lake channel into the main fairway and up towards Hamworthy. We chose a likely looking mooring, beyond the marines' base, near the Rockley channel and away from other boats, and successfully picked it up on the second attempt.

We had our main meal of quorn fillets with potatoes and broccoli and stewed apples before we all retired to our bunks early. We were short of gas, out of petrol, and with flat batteries life on board was a little bit grim.

Thursday 19th April 2001

Still sufficient gas for us to make a cup of tea. Trevor and Magnus sailed off in "Puddleduck" to Rockley sands and the car. "Puddleduck" sailed well under main alone, and then when we realised how light the wind had become, under full sail. We left her tied up at the quay and went off in the car to buy petrol containers and petrol at Cobb's Quay.

On our return to "Calista" we enjoyed a breakfast of sausages, beans and bread. After a late lunch we motored into Rockley and picked up a mooring. We all went ashore in "Puddleduck", rowing in the shallows (against the strong tide), and ferry gliding over the main stream, up to the pontoon.

We drove off in James (the red Landrover) to fill up his gas tanks, shop for food in Tesco's, and find the Calor gas depot to exchange our empty gas bottle.

Dinah and Alex ferried all the shopping out to "Calista", and loaded it on board. Alex stayed aboard to stow everything while Dinah rowed back for the rest of the crew. Just as we reached "Calista" the heavens opened and surrounded us with a vicious rainsquall.

Lunch was had off knees to avoid the trip to the aft cabin to collect the table – and a soaking. Crispy rolls, ham and cheese. After lunch (dishes washed up by Alex for the second time today) we got ready to leave for Wareham.

The mooring was dropped and we motored slowly out of the Rockley channel, and raised the sails as we went. We shut the engine down and tacked our way up the channel, putting the engine on again as the channel narrowed to the point where it was no longer easy to make progress under sail. The engine failed in the lower part of the river and we dropped the anchor to sort it out. Seemed to be an air lock, which was soon sorted out, and we motored on. It packed up again 50 yards short of Wareham Quay. We held on to the bank near the Restaurant. Magnus was standing on the stern deck ready to get into the dinghy. Trevor prepared a long line to take up to the quay, but as he stepped onto the stern deck he slipped, grabbed the boom on the way down, and knocked the end of the boom into Magnus' face. Dinah comforted Magnus whose eyebrow was bleeding, while Trevor rowed a line up to the quay, and Alex hauled us the last few yards against the current in the river.

First aid was administered, and crisps, lemonade and wine consumed while Trevor read "Pigeon Post" to Magnus. The crew was tucked up in the aft cabin by 1000, while the adults continued to read in the cabin – cosy for once with ample gas and battery power.

Friday 20th April 2001

We spent the day alongside the quay, visiting the toyshops where Magnus bought boxes of model soldiers, Alex bought more books, and we stocked up on food and wine, and looked in the hardware shops.

The boys spent the afternoon playing in the aft cabin and reading.

In the evening we went ashore to a pub at the far end of the main street and had a good meal, and some real ale.

Saturday 21st April 2001
After a leisurely breakfast we cast off and motored down the river. At the entrance we hoisted the main and genoa and enjoyed a sail down to Hamworthy. The forecast was for strong easterly winds overnight so we anchored close in among the moorings.

Sunday 22nd April 2001
Trevor had to go to work by train on the next day so we tied up in the new marina on the Quay. We tied up on a deserted pontoon and went off to have showers.

Monday 23rd April 2001
Trevor had to go off on the train in his suit to visit a school in the east of England so he caught the 0700 train to London.

Meanwhile Dinah and the boys spent the day in the town, looking in the shops and relaxing.

Tuesday 24th April 2001
It hardly stopped raining all day and we spent it in the boat reading and playing.

Wednesday 25th April 2001

The big day! Trevor's 50th birthday. We spent the morning opening presents and relaxing. We had intended to move on today if only because it had stopped raining but also because the marina was very expensive, and we had already been there longer than we had intended. Trevor tried unsuccessfully to start the engine. Even after a long hike to buy petrol, to make sure we had not run out it still would not go. We warped "Calista" to the entrance to the marina and set off under reefed main and working jib. After a short and nervous tack we had her sailing and were able to tack through the marina entrance, and reach out into the main harbour. We had a rough and wet sail up the harbour and up the channel to Rockley Sands. We put "Calista" on the mud while we got the sails down, and rowed a rope over to a vacant mooring. When all was organised Alex lifted the keels and we hauled her onto the mooring. We spent the evening relaxing over a birthday tea, and going for a walk.

Thursday 26th April 2001

We were up early and worked our way from buoy to buoy using the tide to take us up to the pontoon and ropes to convenient buoys to hold ourselves back. We soon had "Calista" in a pontoon berth ready to be craned back onto her trailer. When everything was lashed down and "Puddleduck" was back on the roof rack we were off for home. The drive home was uneventful apart from the one bad case of snaking, which frightened all of us.

The engine problem was easily solved when we were at home. There was no spark, and a new set of plug leads, and coil seems to have solved the problem. The snaking is another problem, which we have yet to deal with, but we plan to convert the trailer to 6 wheels. This we hope will increase the resistance to snaking by lengthening the trailer wheelbase.

A season of problems

Peter Davies

A137 "Baby Seal"

Launching in April went well until the boat floated free of the boat hoist; in other words for about 10 minutes. The boat was hoisted clear of its chocks and trundled down to the slip some 200 yards away. It slid into the water and the engine started first time. The keel bolts were already slackened and the crew dutifully wound down 60 turns or so on both keels. The rudder was pulled down and I motored astern, making sure that I did not foul the dinghy painter. Steering there was none! The strong cross wind, aided by the tide, swept the bows round and the dinghy wrapped itself round the notice marking the spit off the end of the launching ramp. The notice finally gave way, scored a groove from the rubbing strake to the waterline and disappeared without trace. It has not been seen since. To my surprise the boat drifted over the spit until the rudder grounded. Hoisting the blade back up soon had the boat clear. When I reached the mooring, which is on a floating pontoon in the lower harbour, I nearly rammed the pontoon. Again, there was virtually no steering. And a lot of reverse thrust saved the paint. When the boat was finally secured I investigated the problem. Neither keel was down. Both had stuck in the fully raised position, and they stayed that way over the next two days whilst I beat them into submission with a very heavy lump hammer and a short piece of piping into which I has inserted a wooden core to soften the impact on the keels which has only recently been painted with epoxy tar.

The problem had arisen because at the end of the previous season my crew had hoisted the keels right to the top of the jacks and then re-tightened all the bolts. The brakes had rusted to the keels and there was no spare thread to work the keels free. It is far better to slacken the jacks by two or three turns and to leave the bolts slack over the winter. If the keels then stick they can be wound up a little to break the rust using the power of the jacks. Repeatedly raising and lowering the keels even over only two or three turns soon frees them off. Without the ability to lift the keels slightly it becomes a matter of brute force to drive them down.

The next time I went to start the engine the batteries were just short of 13 volts so I was surprised when the starter motor would not turn fast enough to start the engine. I persisted too long and smoke rose from the battery compartment. The sensor wire from the alternator had burned off most of its insulation and then gave a good imitation of a cheese cutter as the red hot wire burned its way down through most of the wires which cross from one side of the boat to the other. The next couple of weeks went into replacing the damaged wiring and cleaning the main earth connection to the engine. I thought that my problems had probably been a poor earth connection, coupled with a smaller earth lead not shown on my wiring diagram which had taken the starting current back up to the alternator. However, as later events revealed this was only part (if any) of the problem.

The starter battery, which was seven years old, had collapsed and had to be replaced. I bought a new battery which claimed to be capable of delivering something like 430 amps cold cranking current over 30 seconds. This battery would not even turn the starter motor on its own. I found that I had to use jump leads to put this battery in parallel with my bank of three 75-amp hour service batteries to get the starter motor to turn the engine. Yet another starting battery was then purchased, this one much larger and beefier, but this too seemed marginal in its ability to crank the engine. With the jump leads in place starting became reliable and it was time for some sailing.

I took the dinghy to the upper harbour and topped up the water tank. Four trips carrying three gallons at a time I could have taken the boat up to the tap, but this would have meant waiting for two bridge openings as well as triple mooring alongside the pontoon. The following day I bailed out about two gallons of water from the locker next to the water tank. I suspected that I had overfilled the tank, or that the tank was leaking. The next time I went to the boat I half expected to find more water but the boat was dry, so I concluded that I had overfilled the tank. I took the boat for a few hours' sail and when I came in there was a lot more water to clear up. The tank was definitely leaking.

The next job was to find the leak. The tank came out (with difficulty) and revealed that it had rusted through at the top where the filler pipe was fitted. Some years earlier when I was in Holland it had rusted through at the bottom. At that time I had made a 'temporary' repair with polyester resin and glass cloth. That repair was still quite sound so I repeated the process around the filler pipe. I then poured

about a pint of polyester resin into the tank and swilled it around to fill all the crevices and coat the rusty areas where the galvanising had gone. This was then followed by two slightly smaller quantities of epoxy resin and a generous coat of epoxy was then brushed over the outside of the tank. Finally, the outside of the tank was painted with Hammerite. The tank was left empty for a week, and blown out with the electric dinghy pump every day. It was then re-installed and re-filled. This water had to be discarded and the tank re-filled, a process that I had to repeat three of four times before the taste of the water was acceptable. It is now perfectly sweet and the repair was a lot cheaper than a new tank.

I thought that it was time to start sailing again. Whitby is not the best place from which to sail. The tide changes direction outside the harbour two hours after the tide has turned in the harbour. To set off down tide is to guarantee getting so far away that it becomes a struggle to get back into Whitby against a foul tide. The alternative is to set off against a foul tide and then have an hour of slack water before heading back in. There is nowhere to go. Hartlepool is about 25 miles to the NW and Scarborough is roughly the same distance to the SE. In between there are various anchorages which are all very exposed. Whitby harbour entrance is virtual impassable given any north in the wind above F5 or 6. In case you are thinking of visiting, the facilities are not good and the charges are excessive. The town is charming, but this is the only compensation. Day sailing often means sailing three miles to the W to Sandsend or five miles to Runswick Bay. A good trip is to Staithes. Going the other way gets one to Robin Hoods Bay. Usually people just go sailing as none of the potential destinations offer more than the view ashore with no access to the shore because of the state of the tide. It is said that several members of Whitby Yacht Club have never been out of the bay. They race around the cans every weekend and the rest forever eludes them. Nevertheless, I managed several days of sailing through what was left of June and July. Really good exciting stuff, 10 or 12 miles each time. Then we had a lumpy day.

My usual crew was down below changing his waterproofs, when a lump hit us at the wrong moment. One leg in his trousers and the other half in he was thrown off balance into the cooker. The gimbal supports collapsed and the cooker hung drunkenly and sadly distorted. The cooker is a Techimpex stainless steel two burner and grill job. Sadly it does not live up to this description. The pan supports (and gimbals) are not stainless, nor are the screws holding it together. The grill (as supplied) is incapable of making toast because there are no reflective elements. A slice of bread can be dried out in about 12 minutes by turning it end for end before turning it over and repeating the process. By this time it is inedible and only slightly browned.

The next job was to repair and re-hang the cooker. I took the opportunity to obtain the reflective mesh from a cooker on its way to the local tip. It is not difficult to cut the mesh into suitably sized pieces and to fix these with stainless steel self-tapping screws on the metal plates just above the grill burner. This simple modification transforms the performance. The grill area is just about the size of a large slice of bread but with the mesh in place the grill produces perfect toast in around 3 minutes.

It was time for more sailing, or so I thought. Then the anemometer stopped reading. This involved a trip up the mast for someone lighter than me. I can get up the mast alone but I am very happy to direct operations from deck level.

I have a five-part tackle that is hoisted on the main halyard with the fall brought down via turning blocks to the winch. Two stirrups are fitted to the fall by way of Prusik knots. These stirrups consist of 10 feet of line tied through a short piece of wood just wide enough to accommodate a foot. The climber wears a harness to which another short loop is attached to the topping lift by another Prusik knot. The Prusik knot is made by holding the loop attached to the stirrup at the mid point. This loop is passed behind the rope on which you wish the knot to bind (in this case the fall of the topping lift). The stirrup is now taken in front of the halyard and passed through the loop. This process is repeated, so that the ropes to the stirrup emerge from the centre of the loop. Hold the fall of the stirrup and pull everything tight. At this stage there should be four turns of rope round the topping lift with the fall of the stirrup alongside each other and emerging from the centre of the wrapped turns. When the stirrup is loaded the turns jam on the halyard and the stirrup will support a person's weight without slipping. The knot is made loose by pushing back the loop, which can now be repositioned higher on the halyard and it self tightens by loading the stirrup again. To climb the mast the climber slackens the Prusik knot on his safety harness and slides it as high as possible before pulling it tight to

jam the knot. He then moves the upper stirrup by slackening the knot and positioning it as high as possible on the fall of the tackle. As s/he transfers weight to the stirrup the knot jams and the body weight pulls the fall of the tackle down. The climber moves up by one fifth of the distances stepped. The person below (if there is one) takes in the slack and makes the rope off to a cleat. The climber now slackens the lower stirrup and brings the knot close to the upper one. They then adjust the first stirrup and take a second step. In effect, the climber uses their own weight to push the fall down with their feet, and adjusts their own safety line as they go. The person below does not haul the climber up, they merely take up slack and keep the fall of the tackle taught. It is quite possible to climb the mast single handed, but it is more difficult as the fall is floppy and it harder to pull the second stirrup up the slack rope. It is also more dangerous as the slack fall can tangle on obstructions. It is not a quick way of climbing a mast, but it is fool proof and based on an ice climbing technique for extricating oneself from crevasses on glaciers. A four-part tackle might be equally efficient as the extra mechanical advantage of the fifth part is largely lost to friction between the ropes where they come together near the blocks.

Having got my crew (well over 70 with a triple heart bypass, but much lighter than me) to the top of the mast he fiddled with the connections to the anemometer and made it started reading again. Time for more sailing!

A week later the anemometer failed again. This time I paid a considerably younger person who had formerly worked as a BT engineer to go up and actually cut out the old connections and remake them. This seems to have been a permanent repair in that the thing is still working. What is more, my younger person (52) actually so enjoyed the experience that he is now going round other boats asking if they have any work needed at the tops of their masts. (Perhaps he enjoyed the money rather than the experience?)

It was now into August and time for some real sailing. Earlier in the season I had bought lots of second hand charts from Marine Chart Services (see Practical Boat Owner etc for their address) and had charts from Whitby to the Hebrides. At the moment lots of charts are being withdrawn, to be replaced by charts drawn to WGS84 datum. Many of the second hand charts had been in use up to few months before I bought them at about £2.50 each and were fully corrected up to the beginning of the year. It took me less than two days to correct them all up to date. Luckily this area is rock bound and rocks don't move about much. There were one or two patches of shoaling to change and a few light characteristics. A few buoys went, even less buoys came and relatively few moved. For just over £100 I had nearly a £1000 worth of corrected up to date charts. I wanted to be away.

All season I had been using the Cruising Association crewing service. Most of the people seeking to be crew seem to want a vegetarian, smoke free, 30feet plus boat, bound for somewhere very warm. "Baby Seal", and my plans, didn't fit any of these requirements. However, I did find a couple with limited time who would be available from mid August.

We sailed on the 17 August with a view to reaching Lindisfarne (Holy Island) and getting back in a 10-day period. The first leg was to Hartlepool, which has a very nice marina, a heritage quay with reproduction shops from the Napoleonic era, and a beautifully restored boat of the period. No problems, no real excitement, and no shortage of things to do. The next day saw us to Blyth and then as the weather deteriorated we made passage to Amble. Here we stayed a couple of days as the wind was northerly (against us) and increasing. The engine starting was now getting problematic. The forecast was for NW F5-7 and I set off for Lindisfarne with full knowledge that this destination might have to be changed. The wind went up, it was spring tides, and I did not fancy anchoring in an exposed anchorage with a very strong tide and an engine, which may not start. The charts gave me what I was looking for, an anchorage sheltered from the NW with a wide range of possible courses out of it if I had to sail out without an engine. Beadnell Bay was ideal. We anchored just off the limekilns in about 4 metres, laid a 20lb CQR backed by a 17lb Danforth on 15 metres of chain with a 25-metre scope (a lot of anchor on a lot of chain). It was perfect: the wind howled all night, the sea outside roared, and we bobbed about gently watching the view.

The following morning was clear and bright but the anemometer was reading a fairly steady F7. Time to retreat. The engine started with great difficulty. I had to use a spanner to turn the engine back from compression to allow it to pick up a little speed. At about the fifth attempt it started and the anchors were retrieved. The mainsail had been set, with a

single reef, prior to raising the anchors and we slipped out of the bay without any problem. The full genoa was set and we started racing off to the south with a F7 behind us and a 3-metre swell. The sea state was probably moderate to rough. About an hour after leaving the anchorage the boat broached. From then on it was almost unmanageable. One of my crew had done a Competent Crew course and had 300 miles experience, her partner had never been on a boat before. She kept telling him to look frightened as she took his photograph at the helm with great heaps of water behind him as a background. He refused to look at all frightened and looked as if he was really enjoying himself. Perhaps he just did not know enough to appreciate the situation.

The mainsail was now fully reefed and let out to its maximum extent with a gybe preventer holding the boom firmly in place. The genoa was then poled out goose winged so it could not move. We now had a form of self steering with two sails held out rigidly and more or less self balancing given that the wind was more or less dead astern. We yawed our way down the coast with the engine still running and partially motor sailing. We were sailing too fast for the engine to add any drive, but given the difficulty in starting it I was not going to stop it again until we were safely into Blyth where we would be entering against the prevailing wind. Fortunately both the wind and sea moderated and about half of the passage was made in around F3 with a moderate sea.

Simon (he of no previous experience) did a marvellous job of putting "Baby Seal" onto the visitors` pontoon. My Competent Crew leapt ashore in the way I might have done 50 years ago and we tied up safely. A glance at the stern said it all, the rudder blade had snapped just below the stock. I do not know whether the broach overloaded the rudder and caused it to break, or whether we broached because the rudder broke. Whichever, we had sailed about 35 miles, some of it in a F7, with a broken rudder. Good job it was down wind.

The following day was the Friday before the August Bank Holiday and my crew departed. There was no way the boat could be fixed until after the holiday and they had to be at work on the Tuesday morning. I got the rudder off (and lost the bearing as I removed the top bit). One of the Blyth Yacht Club members took me and the rudder to the local engineering works. I suggested cutting down the blade and using a shorter rudder. They said why not weld it, which they did, but not until the Tuesday. They also filled in the bearing hole and drilled it to fit the pivot pin.

I then encountered Henry at Blyth Yacht Club. He told me that the older members were not charged fees or subscriptions. In fact he only paid a half subscription himself. I looked at Henry and asked how old was old. It seems you have to 85+ to get it free and he was only 78 coming up 79.

His family had insisted that he gave up boats 'because they are dangerous' so he spends half the year going round Europe in a camper van and the other half around Blyth Yacht Club.

He is actually Norwegian but sounds like a local. Over the next few days he did everything possible for me. He ferried me about, took me shopping, and took me to various firms and suppliers. There was no way I could repay him. He would not take money for fuel, he would not have a drink, he would not go out for a meal. He just kept saying, "We are all Yachties –Yah?" When I got the rudder back he even craned the stern of "Baby Seal" out of the water so I could get the pivot bolt through. I had thought I could refit the blade from the dinghy, but an hour of abortive effort as the dinghy kept swinging away from the boat convinced me that there had to be a better way.

Many people helped me; even more took an interest in what was going on. A wonderful club, a great atmosphere, and as pleasant a place to be stuck in as any I can think of.

As I was well and truly stuck over the Bank Holiday I decided it was time to investigate the starter motor. It is held on with two bolts and one nut that connects the cables to the solenoid. One bolt is almost visible and can be removed with difficulty. The other is invisible, almost out of reach, and hard against the crankcase side. It took four people and three and a half hours work before that bolt yielded. In fact I had decided that I would have to lift the engine out to get it before a former motor mechanic turned up and did the business.

When the starter motor came out the pinion end was packed with grey powder and metal filings. I tapped about a mug-full out of it. On Tuesday morning Henry had me at a small local firm that repaired starter motors at 8.a.m. Sadly it didn't open until 9.30. The first thoughts were that the armature had broken up. However, stripping the motor produced about

another pint of the grey powder and half a broken spring washer. The motor was stripped right down, cleaned, lubricated, reassembled and tested. The motor was perfect. The verdict was "There is something nasty on your boat".

Putting the motor back took four and a half hours. The impossible bolt was really impossible to put back. It had to go behind the solenoid, moved at least one inch back to get it parallel to the crankcase side, and then fed forwards to engage in the hole in the starter motor housing. All this in a space in which two fingers would fit, totally out of sight, and with no way of knowing where the hole was. We got adept at retrieving the dropped bolt from the bilge. Finally I put an extra nut on an overlength bolt and put this in from the bell housing side. I could then get a nut and washer on the inside and so clamp the motor into place.

The problem was to find where the grey powder had come from. Nobody could guess, and nobody knew. Then someone with a Volvo engine mentioned a problem which affects some of their engines. There is a drive plate between the flywheel and the gearbox, and this plate can break up. My engine is a Beta, but come Tuesday morning I rang Beta and asked. Yes, I have a drive plate. I think one of the bolts or nuts holding it worked loose and fell off. This would account for my half spring washer and for the occasional rattling that came from the bell housing. The bolt or nut has presumably ground up a lot of drive plate and the ring gear has acted as a pump to ram all the debris into the starter motor. In fact, this was probably the cause of all my starting difficulties all season. The starter motor was so full of rubbish that it could just not turn freely.

By Wednesday everything was back together and I arranged for my regular crew to join me to sail the boat back to Whitby. His wife drove him from Scarborough to Blyth and he arrived around 10.00 am. This meant that we would have a foul tide for the latter part of the trip to Hartlepool. We had a forecast of NW F4/5 occasional F7, veering NW F3/4. We left at 11.00a.m. and motored against the wind with a slackening tide. The wind went from F4/5 to F7 and the tide turned against us (strictly according to the forecast – no problem). It then went F8, then F9, then F10, with no sign of a veer. The sea was like frothy milk. With the wind with the tide the sea did not build as the wind just whipped the crests off. Despite wanting to nurse a sick engine the revs went up and the speed went down. Finally we were doing around 2kts. We had left Blyth with 5 gallons of fuel in the tank. Normally I use between one third and one half of a gallon an hour. After some seven hours running I knew we must be getting low on fuel but I didn't want to open the stern cabin up to get more with water sluicing over the decks. I dipped the tank and the dipstick showed half full. Clearly this was too high a reading, but I reasoned that there must be a reasonable quantity left to surge about and show that reading. We got off Hartlepool and turned in toward the marina. The boat stopped rolling and pitched as we got near the bar. The engine died. It was just on getting dark, it could have been sludge or water stirred up in the tank. I didn`t wait to find out but called the Coastguard. They decided to send the lifeboat. I fiddled with the engine, I topped up the fuel, and then we had the lifeboat on the VHF. They were trying to find us. Would I please give them a slow count to 10? Minutes later we had a lifeboat. In the 20 minutes between calling and them reaching us we had drifted nearly three miles under the influence of wind and tide.

From close up lifeboats look enormous. They are comforting but terrifying. They are so big that one false move and a small boat would be matchwood. Of course I could not catch a heaving line the first time it was thrown. Nor did I on the second. Finally I got it and pulled the messenger across to produce a bight of towrope, which not even the bitts of the Atalanta can accommodate. Moreover, the knot in it was just in the wrong place to get the rope into my stem head fitting (if it would have gone between the cheeks). Finally, I dropped the loop over the windlass and used their heaving line to hold it down to my cleats.

We then had the most gentle and considerate tow that can be imagined. They took endless trouble, and many VHF calls, to establish the optimum towing speed that kept us comfortable and gave them reasonable steerage. I have never seen such skilful boat handling in all my years of sailing. When passing the heaving line they reversed to within two metres of my bow. They went sideways, backwards and forwards always holding station at a minimum distance to avoid collision. Brilliant seamanship and a real empathy for the problems a small boat may encounter when towed too fast in rough water.

The first thought was that they would drop us off where it was safe to anchor. Not knowing the anchorage I rigged a tripping line. The plan

then changed, we would be dropped off alongside a moored fishing boat. Soon we were duly, and securely tied up. I was then told that we were moving again. We were unmoored and taken to the lifeboat mooring and tied up alongside the lifeboat. They had noticed the state of my crew, which shamefully I had not. They had an ambulance waiting and took him off to hospital suffering from mild hypothermia. I got a free ride to the hospital and they arranged a meal in the hospital canteen which was very welcome as I am diabetic and overdue both insulin and food by about three hours. One of the lifeboat crew, Steve Pounder, was even kind enough to stay around in the hospital until 01.00 when my crew was discharged so as to give us both a lift back to the boat in his own car. An amazing service from a truly remarkable group of men. Two of the lifeboat crew, quite independently, told me that I should not feel ashamed about calling them out. The evening was boring, all they had to do was watch the television and play cards. They would much rather fetch boats than find bodies. Some comfort for me, but I could have done better. I should have topped up the fuel despite the inconvenience (In calm water I was able to work out that there had been about a gallon left in the tank when it stopped. Presumably it all ran to the opposite end of the tank and the engine sucked air). I should have noticed that my crew was getting very cold. The problem was that he would not go below, as he felt seasick. He had not eaten, nor would he, as he felt sick. I got too involved with navigation and engine problems. Basically, we were both pretty well exhausted by the battering the wind had given us.

The following morning we left Hartlepool bound for Whitby. The wind was still a strong northwesterly. The mainsail was double reefed, the genoas poled out, and after a short while the smaller cruising chute was also deployed. At times we touched seven knots and reached Whitby at 18.10, ten minutes beyond the e.t.a. We later learned that we were only the second boat to leave Hartlepool that day. A fishing boat had gone out, but everyone else considered it wiser to stay put. After the previous day the weather looked positively benign; it was only blowing around F6 and in the right direction. The sea was lumpy but it only had white horses not solid streaks of foam. What is more, the wind moderated (as forecast and Whitby harbour entrance was passable which was just as well as otherwise we would have had to go back to Hartlepool and John was due to sing in his church choir the following day.

The boat is now out of the water and the next job is to lift the engine and assess the damage. I kept in it for a month, and got one more short sail under ideal conditions. However, I could not take risks with an engine that was not reliable It now sounds rough and has a pronounced vibration. In the next month or so I shall find out why.

I would not say this was a successful season. In total I sailed 355 miles (not all under sail). I didn't reach my intended destination nor did I get anywhere near my dreamed for passage up the East coast of Scotland, through the Caledonian Canal to the Western Isles. There is still next year. Who knows? I did add to my experience. I have never been at sea in F10 before, I have not been rescued by the lifeboat before, and although I have experienced rudder failure before it was in totally different circumstances with relative calm conditions. I wonder what I will learn next year?