ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

2003 - 2004 BULLETIN

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45th Edition

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From the Commodore

I first came across the Atalanta via Denny Desoutter's pictorial book reviewing popular yachts of the 1960's. A SCOD, a Stella, an Eventide and a Shearwater were examined along with a sharply contrasting Atalanta. Its unusual lines were the attraction for me and despite Desoutter feeling they were a little slow, I bought one within a few months. There was logic in the decision; I sensed it offered comparative low maintenance, once on top of things; I could trail it home for care and cosseting and, in my case, I could store it away from the elements in a big barn!

By the time I came to sell more than twenty years later the Atalanta had barely deteriorated. In contrast a friend who had opted for an Eventide at the same time had long since given up the maintenance struggle and destroyed it in a fire. Another friend who had gone for the Stella believing it to be the better boat had conceded that he was slipping well behind with its upkeep and found the time travelling down to the boat yard increasingly irksome. He had failed to launch these past couple of years.

Under new management my old Atlanta is showing that with the right care and attention these boats are capable of going on and on.

Best wishes for the new season

Fred Boothman

Editorial

This year's bulletin is thinner than normal and unusual in as much that there are no accounts of cruising (Hurrah! I hear some say!). I think this is a shame for two reasons; firstly we are denied the encouragement to go out there and go somewhere different and secondly it means that the magnificent Etchell's Trophy will not be awarded.

Apart from lack of cruising logs, we have the accounts of the South Coast Rally and the East Coast Race as well as articles of a more practical nature.

My own sailing this year has been restricted to modern production boats (just not the same!) but I'm confident that "Gellie" (A31/4) will launch early next year following her two year re-fit. Yes, it's been hard work but I think the results will be worthwhile.

The best of winds and tides for next year – hope to see you on the water.

Mike Dixon

South Coast Rally

Jonathan Reynolds

A60 "Achates"

Saturday

A five hour breezeless motor from the Hamble bought us into Chichester Harbour and around East Head, to find "Walrus" & "Emma Duck" rafted in this ever popular anchorage. The raft soon increased to four with the arrival of "Sloeberry" and the rally commenced. Tea was suggested, but G&T seemed more appropriate as we basked in the sunshine of our first days sailing (strictly speaking motoring) of the season.

Thorney Island Sailing Club (RAF, I believe) was the venue for the evenings entertainment, a 20 minute motor from East Head, a lot longer for those that tried to sail. "Walrus" led the convoy to some swinging moorings off the clubhouse, where we rafted two by two, and Chaz, "Walrus's" skipper dashed ashore in his newly acquired Dinky dinghy to assemble an ace Jazz/Folk band. This was made up of Hammond family members and friends, led by Chaz, who impressively sings, plays tea chest bass and mandolin. They provided the very entertaining focal point of the evening, with excellent BBQ and a good cheap bar.

Sunday

Sizzling bacon helped to spur Sunday's bleary start into action and the planning of a race got under way. The preparations were not without a certain amount of attempted posturing and psyching out, like, I suppose, all good contests should be. Tom, "Emma Duck's" skipper tried to baffle us all with his applied advanced knowledge of underwater naval architecture, fairness and flow, "Sloeberry" went on a one hour pre race detour to drop off their dinghy and avoid unnecessary drag or weight, "Achates" crew, not to be left out, tweaked their kicking strap, but "Walrus" skipper took the biscuit with a gigantic, almost convincing build-up to unveiling the sail cover from their, apparently, crisp new secret weapon mainsail, which eventually revealed a slightly more blown out version of one we had all seen in previous years.

The race course was set and all looked to be coming together nicely, until the reluctant committee boat, manned by the left handed jazz band fiddler from the night before, sneaked off and disappeared without trace. So, we did a running start, line abeam and when straight and roughly level we were off.

The start was just off Thorney Island Sailing Club SW 3-4. "Achates" slowly drew ahead and at Pilsey Island we had several boat length's clear water, with "Walrus", "Emma Duck" and "Sloeberry" all grouped in contention with one another. At the entrance of Thorney Channel into Chichester Channel we were careful not to cut a tempting corner, sticking to the channel to avoid the submerged dragons teeth line of broken piles. Into deeper water we were able to harden onto the wind and had developed a comfortable lead passing NE Sandhead Buoy.

Trying to use the full width of the channel on each tack seemed to be the name of the game, until getting a little over ambitious with Stockten's Sands, we suddenly came to a grinding halt. Frenetic loosening of bolts and winding then ensued as we watched "Walrus" reel us in to a few boat lengths, by the time we were under way again. A good measure of how hard the skippers of all four boats were trying, is that, I understand, all of us ran aground at some stage, some more than once. However this also had the effect of allowing us to draw away once more and after rounding the Fishery Bay Buoy and running back down to East Head we crossed the East Head Spit finishing buoy 1st with "Walrus" 2nd. Confusion with the windward Fishery buoy mark made the 3rd and 4th place positions unclear.

We rafted once more at East Head for lunch, but soon it was time to say farewell for another year.

Many thanks to Chaz, once again, for organising a thoroughly enjoyable weekend and we look forward to next year when there is talk of a change of venue to the Hamble.

Putting the mast up alone without assistance

Peter Davies

A137 "Baby Seal"

It is not quite true, as assistance is required to lift the mast into position so as to insert the pin at the heel of the mast. Once this is done raising the mast is a single-handed job (though it is easier with two people).

The first requirement is a crutch that can be erected on the stern deck just aft of the point of balance of the mast. The normal sheet horse is nearly useless as it is on the wrong side of the point of balance. The mast is stern heavy when supported by the sheet horse; a crutch about three feet from the stern puts the mast in much better balance for raising.

The crutch needs securing with 6-8mm line from about half way up to the stern cleats and some other strong point(s) in the cockpit. The object is to prevent the crutch falling over fore and aft. It also needs a line between the two legs to prevent them spreading and jumping over the toe rail. I have two crutches, one was made from a broken television aerial pole with a stainless steel 6mm bolt acting as the pivot point, and the other crutch is made of two lengths of two by one inch planed softwood with a similar pivot bolt. The metal crutch is finished with wooden core plugs at each end and the top plugs protrude far enough to allow them to be contoured to the mast section which helps to preserve the varnish on the mast. This crutch was made just short enough to store in the gutter alongside the cockpit floor and is carried at all times in case I ever need to lower the mast. The wooden crutch is rather longer and lifts the mast higher. However, it is weaker and needs more support by way of lines to keep it in column under load. It is normally only used for the first mast raising of the season.

Doing the job single handed, I fix the metal crutch in the cockpit and then rig stern cleat lines to the wooden crutch that is placed on the stern deck pointing aft. Once the mast has been moved into position and the pivot pin inserted, I can then raise the mast high enough to get the wooden crutch under the mast. More lines are then made fast to it to hold it in position. The mast is now held to the `tabernacle` by its pin and inclined about 10 degrees. This is the moment to carry out a final check that all the lines are in their correct positions and that all mast-head electrical connections are good. It is really annoying to get the mast up only to find that the main halyard is in front of the spreaders or that the mast-head anchor light needs a new bulb. Even if you do check it is still possible for things to go wrong, but at least you have shifted the odds in your favour.

The next job is to secure the cap and aft shrouds and the back stay. I have extended the chain plates for the cap shrouds so that the lower pivot points for the bottle screws are in line with the pivot pin of the mast. This means that the cap stays can be set up tight

To prevent lateral movement of the mast as it is hoisted. Early editions of the Bulletin have various articles on solving this problem. Most look rather fiddly or flimsy; I am very happy with my 'L'-shaped lump of metal which links the rear chain plate to the cap chain plate and is just about destruction-proof, even if heavy.

The spinnaker pole is now rigged with two 6mm lines together with a five-part tackle and the spinnaker halyard. BEWARE the original Tufnol block is probably past its sell by date. Mine disintegrated this year No real damage was done even though it meant lowering the mast back to the crutches to replace the block.

In addition to the spinnaker halyard I also attach my emergency fore stay to the end of the spinnaker pole (this is what saved the mast when the spinnaker block parted) The next problem is to manipulate the roller reefing spar. This is best done by rigging a single sheave to the end of the spinnaker pole with a length of line tied to the end of the roller spar and sufficient length of line to reach the deck when the spinnaker pole is raised to a vertical position. By this time the end of the spinnaker pole is pretty crowded but relatively thin lines can be used for lateral supports and the hoisting of the roller spar.

The spinnaker pole is now raised to a vertical position and is clipped to the normal attachment on the mast. The lateral lines tied off to the chain plates or the toe rail to hold the pole upright. These lines must be in line with the pivot point of the mast. The fall of the five-part tackle is led through a block attached to the stem head, and via turning blocks (for which I use two snatch blocks) so as to get a fair lead to one of the cockpit winches.

The next job is to hoist the end of the roller spar so that it lies parallel to the spinnaker halyard and make off the fall of the line to the single sheave. This is much easier and more reliable than having a person trying to walk the roller down the deck to the stem head. The mast is now ready for hoisting, but first have a final check on the run of all the lines. Hoisting is a relatively slow job using the original winches. Each stroke gains about one inch using a five-part tackle; however, the load is relatively light. Once the mast has been raised beyond 45 degrees the loads begin to get lighter and the job gets easier. Once the mast is vertical I secure the emergency forestay, and then dismantle the spinnaker pole before fixing the roller spar on the main forestay to the stem head fitting. It is then just a simple job of fixing the fore shrouds and adjusting all the bottle screws to set the rig up properly.

It takes about two hours to put the mast on one's own. At least half of the time goes on rigging the gear. The lift is rather slow as the Atalanta's winches are hardly high tech. It is also necessary to keep an eye on all the bottle screws to ensure that none have capsized and that all the shrouds and backstays are coming up cleanly.

Incidentally, lowering the mast without assistance is much more difficult than raising it. Preparations are much the same, but the real problem is getting the mast to move. With all the gear up and the forestays released, and the fore shrouds undone the mast still stands (Oh, by the way, if you normally sail with the pivot pin removed it is a good idea to ensure that you have fitted it before attempting to lower the mast). To get it moving the mast needs a good hard shove. This means leaving some slack in the tackle and cleating off the fall. Then shove the mast. It will probably take quite a few tries to find just how much slack has to be left to get the mast actually moving. Once it is up it seems to want to stay that way.

The main point in writing this is to convince other owners that the mast can be raised, and lowered, without any one else to assist. It took me a few years to work it out, but it has made me independent of other people who always seem to be otherwise occupied when I want to do things with the mast.

A key feature of this system is to have an emergency fore stay. This shares its mast attachment with the normal forestay and is attached at deck level to a U-bolt fixed through my windlass. It allows me to roll my headsail and use a proper storm jib when conditions get really bad. The mast can be raised without this extra forestay but everything then depends on the spinnaker halyard and its block. If you are doing it using only the spinnaker halyard be sure to check both the halyard and the block as any fault with either could lead to disaster.

The most vital point I leave to last. Before lowering the mast, pull the main hatch fully shut. If you do not do this, the mast will crunch the hatch if you are lowering it onto the normal support on the sheet horse. Years ago I abandoned the sheet horse in favour of twin mainsheets that give rather better sail control (especially for gybing) and much better access to the stern cabin. If you forget to close your main hatch before lowering the mast please write to me for details of how to make a new forehatch. I learned this one the hard way!

"2003 - WEST MERSEA CUP"
"Blue Belle's" own parody

David Allan

Hello everyone. "Blue Belle" calling. August 2003 - I did it again. Well, it was a bit disappointing; not many other members of the Atalanta family turned up for the Annual West Mersea Regatta. The weather and wind was the best we have had for many a year. Saturday the 16th was a superb Summer's sun shiney day. Two Atalanta's, and little me, "Blue Belle" a lovely maintained and cared for Fulmer. My proud owners pushed the bank account a little further during the winter, giving me a lovely new alloy mast and boom. (My wooden mast having snapped in the laying up). Made by those nice men at Sparlight, Brightlingsea.

The wind was northerly 3/4, blowing at an angle off the island shore and the tide in the River Blackwater was the last of the ebb. As ever, my two crew were getting all worked up. "It's going to be a westerly start, sailing over the last of the ebb". How wrong the boys were. It was an easterly start. Too much vino late last night. The crew didn't turn up until gone 22:45 hours, sailing from the River Medway. Come on boys, get it together.

Out at the Nass Beacon start line area. Jane Stern in "Bluster" is well up on the line, and Graham Hill in "Joann" is not far behind her. Skirt sniffer! The course number is up with the ten-minute flag. Course number 19. Eleven nautical miles around an easterly course, leaving all buoys to starboard. A NE direction to No 1. Then southerly course reach to No 2. Westerly run to No 5 along the shallows of the Bradwell shore flats. Wind free on the starboard quarter, north-westerly to No 3, allowing for the early flood tide gathering in the deeps of the River Blackwater. Beating south-easterly to clear the southerly Outer Limit Mark or, free off, and go inshore, towards the shallows of the Mersea Island shore, tacking down towards the No 1 buoy again. Then a reach to number 2 and down wind to No 5. Finally, hardening up, to beat up wind and tide, to round the MG buoy to port and race down wind to the finish line. Well my lovely's that's the theory of the set race course.

Lady Wick had presented me with a nice new pair of binoculars this season, after last year's fiasco. The crew having left them at home. Do you believe it? Any how; the starting gun goes off and as if by magic, some hundred or so boats turn to beat across the line towards No 1 buoy east of the Nass Beacon and off the Island shore. It was a tight beat. The wind was beginning to go more easterly, as the weathermen had predicted. But on board, they hadn't yet worked out my strategy, the crew didn't even have the course worked out. "Oh come, come boys, what a let down". Jane Stern, "Bluster" was well away, tacking closely inshore. We couldn't find "Joann" in amongst the Cruiser Class boats until we saw her coming up towards us at a pleasant rate of knots. My boy's were learning how the new gear best be used, to keep our speed at maximum. I am of course much slower to windward than the Atalanta's with my reduced water line length. But my, how I make up for it down wind. I call it "Tutu sailing". Only, that is; if "The Boy's" get it up and free of my snuffer.

Sailing to No 1 buoy seemed slow and the other boats were overtaking me. Then that is quite usual to windward. The reach to No 2 was discussed on deck. If only I had another crewmember I could fly the cruising shute, but I didn't. The wind kept coming around to the east and they, the earthlings decided to wimp out and wait until I had rounded No 2 when I had a free run down wind to No 5. Talk about getting my knickers in a twist. Ric of The Wick, couldn't sort out his lazy sheet from his guy. Naughty boy. So much time lost. My crew know quite well how I love my Annual Down Wind Romp - letting it all hang out – bloomin' lovely feelin' darlings. By this time I could see other boats having difficulties with their spinnakers in the changing wind directions. One poor girl had hers in a sort of hourglass. I wish I had that sort of figure!

By the time I got to No 5 "Bluster" and "Joann" had commenced their windward leg back up to No 1. I could see the ebb of motivation creeping upon my crew. Come on Boys. Remember, yesterday you careened me port and starboard to clean my bottom off - It's helping me keep up a good average time over the course. Not for you to reason why - mice and men, cabbages and kings, and all that. Keep your minds on the course in hand. Motivation, motivation, motivation. Not, constipation, constipation, constipation.

Around No 5 like a rocket, the helm watching the leeward drift of the strengthening flood tide as I cross the Blackwater deeps. Round No 3, hardened up to go inshore, thinking "Bluster" had done very well moving over the Nass shallows. It wasn't long before the new subterfuge to strength was under-mining the boys. A decision to flight in the shallows or tack out into the increasing tide and fight the way to windward whilst being pushed much further off our required course. "If the wind continues to go further in the southeast I will be freer, once past the Outer Limit Mark. They chose the latter, putting in several time-wasting tacks, some of which were badly handled, costing much time and, if they only knew it, weakening their strength further.

Once clear of the OLM I was able to set a direct course to No 1 mark. I was to all intents and purposes sailing on my port ear! The toe rail was awash and the alloy mast seemed 30 degrees from the water. I thought to my self, it shouldn't be like this darlings - I believe my lovely frame is beginning to creak. Whoa boys, whoa! I could see the two Atalanta's by now reaching between No's 1 and 2 buoys. Well, I did eventually get up there, rounded and port tacked with the tide screaming westward. The continuing race would now be a repeat of the earlier course headings. But I needed to remember that I should round up hard at No 5 Instead of proceeding to No 3. This time the boys had hold of me and I intended to strut my stuff. Oh! My lovely setting sails. What a show off I am, given the right conditions. The boys were happier now. Contemplating the improvement of their cruising shute hoist and my dance down wind. No 2 for the last time and away we flew. Nicely done boys, I am proud of you. They chose to get out into the tide and then gibe me to finish the leg to No 5. Which all considering, went remarkably well. We had the course all to ourselves by now. Nearly the last boat in the fleet, again! We gibed the mark. Then a miracle happened!

The wind picked up even stronger and freed us to a lesser extent. God! The side of the boat was under water, the mast horizontal. However, when the helm eased my main sheet I seemed to lift my fore parts and increase my speed. I know that was so, because I heard the boys talking about the increasing speed on the knot-meter. I tell you, that was a most exhilarating sail to windward. I could see how I kept shortening the distance between the other boats. I screamed across on starboard tack towards the MG buoy. By which time, "Bluster" and "Joann" were making their way to the finish line. The boys were now well elated, 12 minutes behind, 10 minutes behind, and by 9 minutes behind, they thought the elapsed time correction means, "It must be in the bag". I romped home to the finish line a very surprised Fulmer, I can tell you. What a great course and sail it turned out to be. It makes you feel it's grand to be alive. Well, if only for once a year.

The official results of the race. West Mersea Town Regatta 2003 - Atalanta Class sailing for the Atalanta Cup, in order of finishing:-

Boat	**Sail No**	**TCC**	**Finish time**	**Corrected**	**Position**
"Bluster"	A183	0.71	222.67 min	156.98	2nd
"Joann"	A 65	0.71	223.28 min	158.71	3rd
"Blue Belle"	F54	0.6	229.58 min	136.97	1st

The racing now over, I sailed up to the moorings on the piles. It was a real blow by now, top end of 5 maybe a few gusts of 6, but the hot sunshine made up for the wind. A lovely chook salad was ready for the crew. Lady Wick and The Dowager Allen had enjoyed a peaceful morning and forenoon aboard 'Pandemonium' awaiting our return. A wee sleeps for the warn-out crew - poor dears - ready for the evening festivities and all was well with the world. The traditional grand firework display was very much up to par. Each year it seems to get better - it did, yet again.

On behalf of the girls and our crews, I have been asked to give a vote of thanks to our Vice Commodore John Searle, for organising what was to be his last rally. John will be handing the organisation over - so I am led to believe - to Graham Hill who has agreed to take up The Organiser's gauntlet in 2004. John has always been ready to promote West Mersea. Well done good and faithful servant. His annual phone call, to check out if we girl's will be sailing towards West Mersea for the East Coast Rally and Race, was welcomed by many a crew over the years. It always started with, "Hello dear boy, will you and your good-lady be coming this year". Oh yes John, we would

not miss it for the world, it's a part of our annual calendar of events. It's the East Coastman's Cowes". All our thanks to Margaret Odling and her family for letting us use the Barn at Gun House. It was good to see Margaret pressing on in her amicable manner. Sadly, I need reflect that like the boats, the crews and members of the Association are getting older. All will succumb to shore duties sooner than we realise. Thank God the Grim Reaper is not allowed to go sailing! Bless you all darlings.

Finally, I would like to proposition you all. There's a thing! Lets make a special effort to be afloat in 2004. See what we can conjure up. How about a week's flotilla sailing in company before or after next year's regatta. We could then all go home after the Big Bang of the fireworks. A climax to top all climaxes. Oh! And thank you West Mersea for hosting us all once again. You are a bit of paradise to behold and enjoy.

Loves you all - Blue Belle

Removal and Replacement of the Deadwood

Colin Twyford

A95 "Hiran"

When Hiran was brought ashore at the end of the 2002 season, I spent some time on the usual tasks of cleaning. The barnacles had been very active and while scraping the bottom I realised that the Deadwood was very soft where it was attached to the hull. A closer examination revealed that a former owner had replaced a one-inch piece of timber on the underside. I am ashamed to say that I had not noticed this during the last 20 years, even though the bottom had been taken back to wood, coated with 5 coats of West resin and finished with Highbuild about 12 years ago.

The whole section had to come off and be replaced, a task that I was not too keen start. Once the sun started to shine in the Spring I sharpened my chisels and hacked it all off. It was very wet, but once removed the bottom appeared quite sound and the prop-shaft was well sealed where it entered the hull.

The section was 25" long and 4" square at the stern, tapering to 4"x1" where it met the keel-band. As far as I could see it had been made in two sections, with the shaft hole cut out of both sections. The two pieces of timber (Mahogany) were cut and with assistance each side was offered up, marked along the length and position of the shaft and roughly cut out with a router, making the necessary larger section at the rear to accommodate the shaft end.

I decided to use three bronze screws each side, two underneath the shaft and one above, with four screws pulling the assembly up from inside the boat. (The original had been screwed up to the bottom, but I felt happier to go through the Hog.) Holes were drilled and the whole assembly was offered up. Once satisfied with the fit the shaft was greased, Sikaflex was spread into both channels and West Epoxy applied. Clamps secured the two sections together then they were screwed tightly. A piece of timber was wedged up to ensure a good marriage to the hull and the four screws were tightened up through the Hog. The oval end-piece of the prop-shaft was secured with two bronze coach screws and all screws had wooden plugs to seal them.

After a season afloat there has been no sign of leakage. The problem was not as daunting as it first appeared.

Protecting the Rudder Blade

Peter Davies

A137 "Baby Seal"

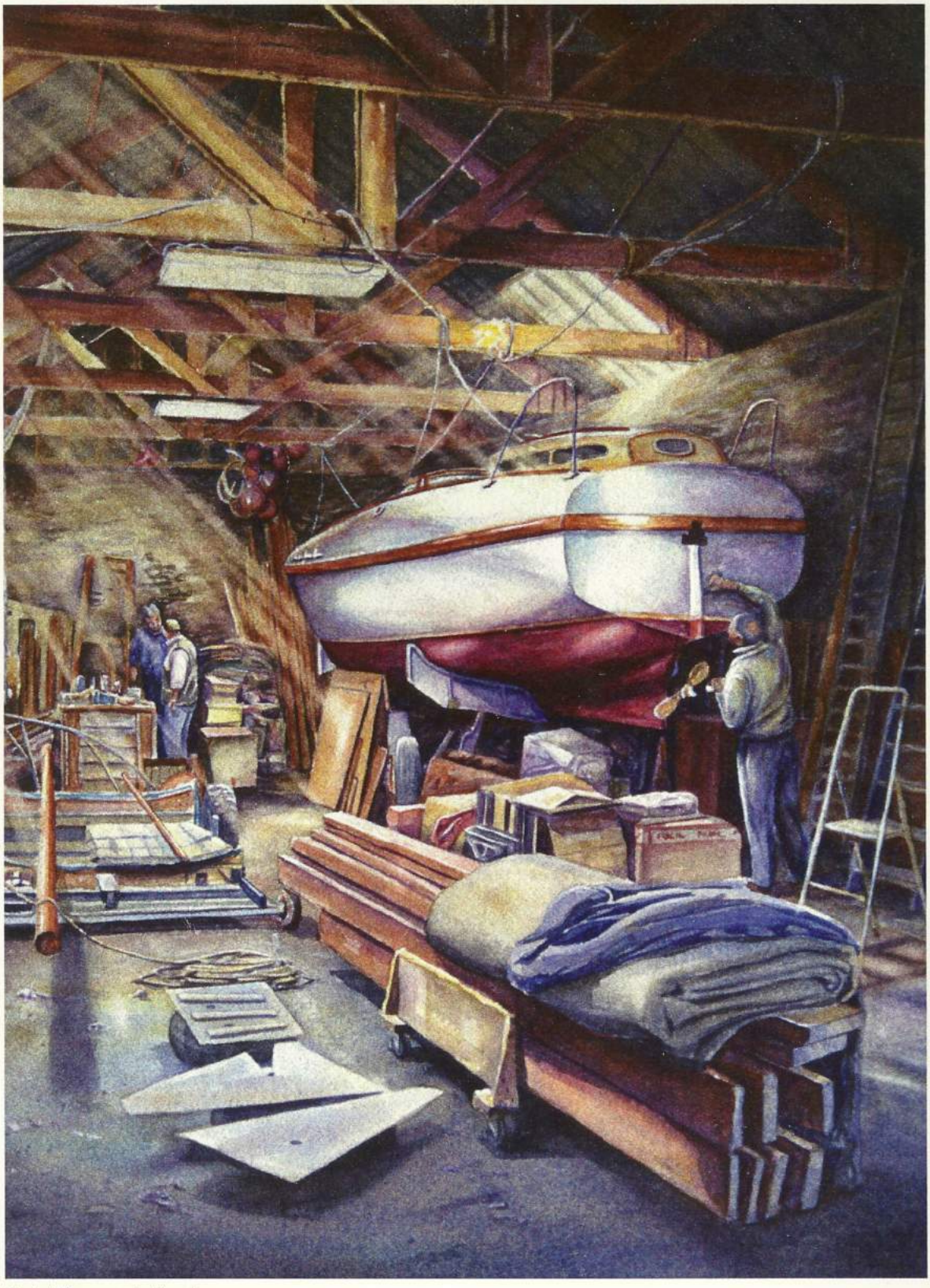
The rudder blade and stock are made of aluminium alloy that reacts badly to currently available antifouling paints that are copper rich. White spots of flaking corrosion are visible as the aluminium is electrolytically eroded.

During refitting this year I decided to experiment with protecting the rudder blade. Both the blade and the stock were sanded down and painted with a two-pack paint. The stock received no further treatment other than two coats of antifouling. The rudder blade was given one coat of epoxy resin (I doubt that the make was important) before being skinned with one layer of thin glass cloth, followed by one layer of glass tissue. Glass cloth can be laid in epoxy resin but glass tissue cannot. The tissue is bound together with something soluble in polyester resin and any attempt to lay it with epoxy resin results in bubbles, voids and other surface blemishes. Both the cloth and the tissue are best laid with polyester resin. The snag is that polyester resins are not waterproof (they are almost the original microporous coating except that they transmit water droplets not just vapour). The whole was then given three coats of epoxy resin to keep the water out.

Now for the tricky bit. All this extra resin and cloth made the rudder thicker and caused it to bind in the stock. The answer was to sand down the part that went into the stock just enough to allow free movement before sealing the surface with another thin coat of epoxy. Protection from antifouling within the jaws of the rudder stock is not an issue, nothing can grow there and that bit never gets antifouled anyway. This treatment almost certainly strengthens the rudder blade. It also takes out the slack which has no doubt arisen over years of use with corrosion making the blade thinner and the jaws of the stock wider.

It is important to check the full range of movement as the jaws of the stock are almost certainly splayed out and the rudder is likely to bind when lowered to its full extent. The visible parts of the rudder blade were then given two coats of antifouling.

On lifting out, the stock was again showing the ravages of corrosion but the rudder blade was absolutely clean. A quick pressure wash and it looked good enough to go back in the water. Next year the rudder stock is due for the same treatment with all the antifouled surfaces being sheathed in epoxy resin and class cloth and tissue followed by epoxy.
Incidentally, I used no etching primer on the blade, the surface was quite rough enough to hold the initial coat of two pack polyester paint without further etching. The cost was minimal and the results exceeded my hopes. One less source of corrosion.



Detail from painting by
Paul Howey