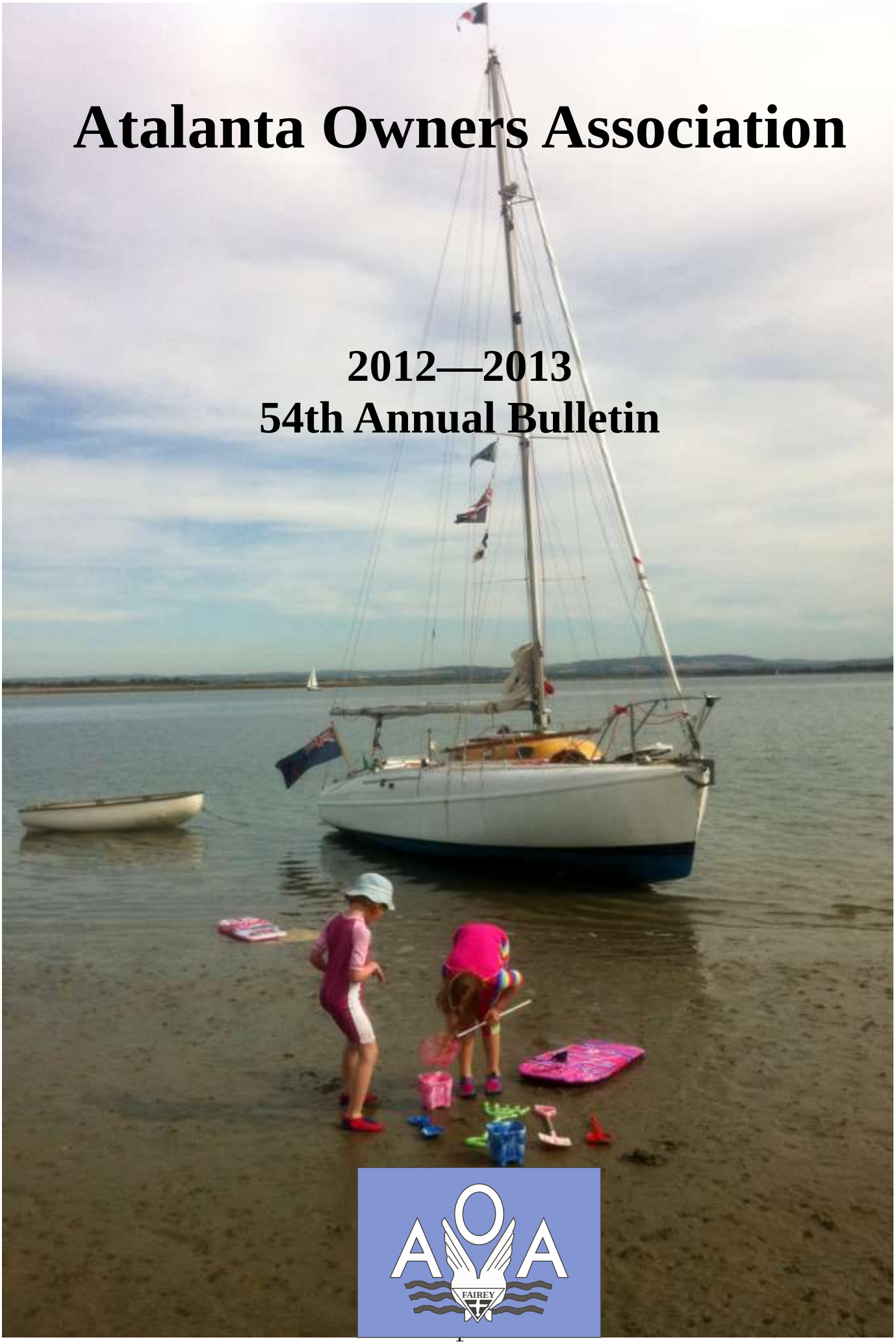
Atalanta Owners Association

2012—2013
54th Annual Bulletin



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Front cover photograph © Simon Garratt

Message from the Commodore

I hope that a change in venue for our AGM/Luncheon will herald a vitalisation of the AOA. During my time in office as Hon. Sec. I attempted to involve owners of Fairey Fishermans' in our various gatherings. On two occasions Fisherman owners attempted to organise an Association but these efforts did not seem to be successful. Now thanks to the efforts of our current Hon. Sec., John Ingleby, we have enlisted the first Fisherman owner into our ranks. I hope that a change in our constitution can involve and attract more owners of these sister crafts to become boat owning members. Therefore I herald Jim Pailing owner of "Tuan Mac" the first of his kind to join us and I look forward to a new section of boats being listed in the future. So if you know of any Fisherman's in your area please encourage them to join.

Not wishing to dwell on a disappointing season for many of us boat owners and the devastating floods that have affected many parts of the country, I look forward to more pleasant and stable weather in 2013 and hope that you will all continue to enjoy the pleasure of sailing, and of course restoring and repairing our classic craft. Please remember to record Logs, photographs, renovations and items of interest to include in the next Annual Bulletin that gives us so much pleasure in the winter months.

Colin Twyford A95

Message from the Editor

Is seems an amazingly short time since I was trying to get the last Bulletin together., and before I know it the next one is ready to go to the printers!

A big thank you is due to all of those members who have written articles for this Bulletin. Likewise thanks are due to all of you who have sent me photographs for the front cover and the calendar.

With your help I have put together another brilliant Bulletin (well I think it is brilliant).

It has plenty of cruises and adventures in it to whet your appetite for next seasons sailing as well as lots of technical stuff to enthuse you to get your boat ready for the spring.

I know it has been a poor summer—but it was ever thus—lets hope for one of those special summers for next year!

Happy sailing in 2013!

Trevor Thompson

Winds of Change
By Keith & Frouwke Viewing, Solone A162.

"This is Solent Coast Guard, vessels to the east of Selsea Bill and west of Lyme Regis, listen on channel 86". "There is a strong wind warning; wind, SW, backing to S and S.E., force 4, 5, 6, and 7, later". The weather farther west was always the same, plus gale 8. And was that to be expected in a day or so? Strong winds were commonplace but seldom at night or in the early morning when all was peace until……...

None of that stuff really bothered us, for when Solone was launched she leaked! Oh dear, and the rains came as in the tropics too. The flood was traced to a leaking bolt on the loo outlet flange, and then to the valve itself. But still it leaked, just a steady and minor flow of good clear water from the Avon River in flood. And why was that?

Not long ago Solone was just a little too far forward on her trailer and the bow was pinched in way of those awful inlet and outlet flanges. The daily ration was about two full cups and that would need attention, sometime!

The rains came again, the storms blew and it was time to hide under cover and investigate. Calista Trevor, T 10, was on a Tall Ship in Tobermory, but Dinah kindly gave the number and there was the first step. Trevor and David Ingram knew about the 'sand keel' and they recommended Murray Reid of Methusela, A 87, now in New Zealand and his very helpful article in the Bulletin of 2007 that included his on-line photo-album. We soon had a very useful description of problems that may be sent to try us all!
The stem band was soon off and then probes by chisel removed thin slices of mahogany, some black and some recognisable reddish brown. At first the black stuff was of concern for best Central African dry rot is no different, but water-soaked mahogany dis-

Frouwke and Solone in Rossiter's shed

colours black and no powder or mushrooms were seen; the spirits rose. The wet was chased out over about 14 inches of keel forward of the loo flanges to reveal the end-grain of the moulded ply. You could expect the hog and the hot-moulded sides of the hull to be planed flush and the keel glued and screwed down over the end-grain. Not so; the sides of the hull were about 12 mm proud of the hog and all that we had done was to remove a short strip of filler, and the keel. The hull was dried out and a new strip installed complete with best-blue-epoxy-filler, as used on transatlantic rowing boats. That was covered by an insert of a new keel, and all made good. The boat was dry.

The imagination runs riot in the dark hours as you try to work out "The Reason Why". The halves of the plywood shell have to be of constant width to be covered by the keel. But if the hog is secure in the jig, then the relevant adjustments are made from a thin slice of filler; interesting, and revealed only 51 years later!

Christchurch

There was plenty of time to consider rain and showers, or was it showery-rain, and why it was that Sujanwiz was the only other of our famous name seen in Christchurch over 20 years? And she in an old photograph somewhere near the sailing club, founded in 1896! Why no other Atalantas?

The draft at knee height is more than adequate to negotiate the twin branches of the Avon and the Stour, lined with moorings for as far as you can see and all are well protected by Hengistbury Head.

But a steady hand is needed in the approach from the south; you estimate the set of the tide and then try for a fair course mid-way between the Needles and Old Harry. In bad weather you need confidence to drive to the shore in the mist, but you find the channel buoys, and when all seems lost and the surf is almost upon us, the course is 270 degrees to enter the narrow channel that they call 'The Run'. The small group of buildings on the sea wall at Mudeford mark the entrance, but these may not be clear until it is time to turn.

The great advantage of Christchurch Harbour is that it lies about mid-way between Hurst and Poole, both about three hours of easy sail depending upon tide and wind. Within the harbour the flood is about 5 hours, with a stand of about 3 hours, and then the ebb for about 4 hours. The greatest range is 1.4m, but the locals reckon that 4 ft is the maximum practical draft. The ebb-stream continues in the Run for about 1.5 hours after the start of the flood at sea.

For the Solent, Rossiter's advise you leave Christchurch about 1.5 hours before 1st H/W to take the last of the flood along the

Safely moored in Christchurch

north passage close to Hurst Castle, and then into the Hurst Narrows by slack water to avoid a tumble. Alternatively, leave on the 2nd H/W and sail against the ebb (wind over tide?) to Hurst at L/W, and then carry the young flood through the Solent. For Poole, you leave an hour after the first H/W, to carry the ebb to Poole. Then you carry the flood of the 2nd H/W to make the entrance.

The fishing nets and lobster pots are always a problem off Hengistbury Head for these seem endless as they extend well out to the Christchurch Ledge Buoy. A reach towards the Island takes you well clear of the Ledge and then it is port tack and close hauled for the dip of the land into Poole. The narrow passage inshore of the middle ground buoy, is well marked and you may prefer to motor-sail a few hundred yards to the entrance before the ebb begins its run. There is no real advantage in a leg to windward to find the shipping channel unless you wish to moor in Swanage Bay for a few hours.

The origins of these somewhat sleepy small towns are fascinating, and easy to immerse in the mysteries; for example, the massive pile of Christchurch Priory, 1094, that rises from the Saxon Minster of 700, and the castle keep of 1100. These follow your twists and turns in the channel to the sea but there are sculptures in the gentle flanks of Hengistbury; some are Iron Age smelting sites and defences, but the most extensive are those of the iron mine, and even a proposed large-scale foundry for cannon in 1676. The production of 1,000 t pa of ore was steady for 34 years to 1906, but scavenging from the beach to seaward resulted in the serious erosion of Hengistbury, and mining ceased. Mudeford Quay was used to load the iron and to land coal. The town had prospered from a quasi cottage-industry in the production of tiny steel chains to drive conical 'Fusee' gears in watches and clocks, said to be invented in London, 1660. The production was from 1790 and flourished during the Napoleonic trade embargoes and the war, was steady to 1899, and in a small way to 1916 when the business was bought-out by the Admiralty.

Now another change is in the wind for ENECO of Holland proposes to establish 100 turbines (9 MW) about 20 km off shore from Hengistbury. The area is roughly rectangular, about 15 km square, but extends to about 20 km to the N and towards the shore. The arc of the blades will reach 205 m, and your course home will be rather more interesting.

Poole

There came a day of relative peace and calm; the wind W to SW, 3 or 4, perhaps 5 or 6 later and time to go for a sail, no matter how short. It was gentle over the ledge with only the faintest swell with fish-nets and lobster pots discouraged by the turmoil of the previous weeks. There was enough wind to sail easily and as we came close to Poole entrance and the old hotel complex on the east bank, it was good to imagine a grand old man, wraith-like on the shore; was this Marchese Marconi who was said have lived here for 30 years? You might see through the water-smoke rolling down from the Purbeck Hills, the outline of his 30m radio mast in the grounds, and in the distance, the Elettra, his superb steam yacht moored off Brownsea ready for yet another ship to shore or ship to ship radio test of the time. His very first patent was filed in England!

Those who had anchored in Swanage Bay for a few hours until the flood might hear the clash and thumps as King Alfred took on the Viking Fleet. Imagine; the fleet is safe under the lee of the Purbeck Hills and anchored in the shallows with a beach party in full swing. They need an easterly to make sensible progress up-river and into the hinterland; they are stuck. The wind shift, when it comes is rapid and not expected; they scramble on board, man the benches and lunge for the oars. But they are caught on a lee shore, and embayed you might say! Now Alfred and friends are seen reaching fast on the ebb out of Poole and the invaders are lost.

The Seal of Poole (1325).

The only obstruction now is the chain ferry, and that moves easily from one bank to the other with no delay when the last vehicle is on board. Now the Harbour Master will advise the Magistrate concerning those who are caught in its chains; oh dear, again! Safely past the ferry and we have decisions to make. On the port hand, a rough patch of middle ground is swept by the tidal streams, but beyond is an extensive sand-bank that lies between the shingle spit upon which the ferry lands, and the great flat topped bulk of Brownsea Island; National Trust.

Deep water channels surround this bank, but the wind is SW and there is no protection in Blood Alley, under the cliffs of Brownsea, or in South Deep until you reach Goathorn Pier, busy perhaps with some great oil-well machinery rising above the trees.

The occasional shallow water inlet in these sand banks are a blessing to those chased back to Poole by the fury of a strong wind; simply anchor in a metre or so and take the ground while the wind whistles and the spume passes by.

Now we are swept past Brownsea Castle, but Marconi's Elettra has gone, and then there is another choice; try for a vacant mooring in the Wych channel close under the lee of the island, or take a chance to find a slot in the yacht clubs and marinas that fringe Sandbanks on a lee shore? We had tried that one late evening home from Alderney, jib rolled tight and main spilling the wind. No room at the inn and too exciting by far, so it was back to the main shipping channel with the Brittany Ferry terminal in sight. Soon the north shore of Brownsea was visible, open to the wind and twelve years ago there were no moorings in sight and what sort of place was this? The choice then was for Shipstall Point, easy for the Atalanta in shallows all of the way with the depth gauge flickering and the keels raised with the only warning from the rudder blade. This most excellent depth sounder draws two feet below the keels, the up-haul is to hand, and is immediate.

So this year we were back to Shipstall Point, easy now with two channels, Wills Cut and Balls Lake, both marked by strong poles (N-S) across the shallows, and the Upper Wych channel , E-W, that connects both. There was no need to anchor for three mooring buoys were under the cliff; two occupied by substantial craft but a beautiful cerise item lay between, seen perhaps, as some prize for good behaviour? Probably not, but what did the bold initials 'HM' actually mean? Our line was secure and just as well, for another strong wind came to pass, at first SW as a follow-up to the last, and then it was stronger but SE. The seabirds gathered in hundreds on the shallow sand spit close by, an attempt to land was shelved for sensible reasons, including those patches of shell the better to slice the dinghy asunder. And where were the fallow deer this year? Perhaps on the saltings farther west where during a weekend a fair collection of boats, ancient and modern had gathered anchored in the mud on either flank of the channel.

The fetch of about 3 miles in the strong SE resulted in a gentle but irregular rolling motion acceptable to some and less so to others, favoured, perhaps, by the lee berth. So seabirds of all sorts, kayaks chanced the storm (well, it was a Bank Holiday), and it was time to change the pitch of the rigging and move off to peace and quiet, even in

the River Frome. That was done easily enough with about 30% jib and no main as the flood took us past the swathe of moorings near the Royal Marines Base that include Tern II (Claude Worth). And then it was to the ghosts of Russell Quay loading ball clay for Wedgewood on the west bank, and where was the Dinghy Club? Had that gone too?

Thrills were to come, for as we approached the up-stream marker of the water-ski area, we kept close to the lee of the channel so that our bow was say, within 10m of the stb'd buoy. Then there was a sudden roar of 150 hp in the wind; the first 'whoosh' was the boat and then another as the skier took the gap at about 40 knots; was this yet another 'Contact Sport' for international competition?

And so to the Frome; around that tight bend from west to north, and into the short, straight, channel where sensible people anchor hard against the weather bank well protected by waving fronds of the osiers, and a good view of the Purbecks on the flood. You have to accept the roar and wash of go-go boats as they lean forward against the acceleration, for this is a natural thing; what can you do? Around the next bend, where the stream turns W, you are open to the winds but after the great expanse of Poole the river seems very narrow indeed until the eye is accustomed to river-life. Here there are mooring buoys and several unoccupied and so a temptation for the itinerant; those with no lines strung between appear unwanted and also, unloved. Two in particular take the ground and are not for designer craft, but of course, these are for US.

Hard on the other, N bank, of the river there is a tiny inlet, occupied now by a plastic motor craft that obscures the strong wooden private jetty and the pair of substantial steel ladders. You need these to climb to the path along the river bank, and to another that enters a range of scrub and woodland to cross the well-preserved East Wall of Wareham Town; only 2 km distant.

Moored at Shipstall Point

These things are good for the soul; but nowhere in the Bulletins have we found descriptions of how to board a pneumatic dinghy from an Atalanta! At first we had brought sections of aluminium channel from Africa, cut to make the treads for a boarding ladder with ropes passing through the ends. This was too flexible for the less agile, but manageable when the boat was aground. Eventually the solution was found; wedge that 8 ft. dinghy between rudder blade and transom; then hand on the rail, first foot on the rudder-head, then next foot across the rudder blade, (say two inches of freeboard), and so into the dinghy; 'hands across, one foot in, then in together'! Not for the faint-hearted of course, but as the man said, 'Geox Shoes let water in, as well as out'!

In the Wareham River

The only boarding sites that we had found, other than the Town Quay at Wareham, were on the S bank; notably at the busy Ridge Wharf (water, thank you), a small slip at Red Cliff, that seems private but used by many, and at Redclyffe YC. You need a bicycle at least to carry stores from the town to the S bank, but better for us to take a chance and arrive at Wareham on foot, soaked to the skin! Here are Charity Shops galore, all include change-cubicles and those affordable conversions are a dream; change from wet to dry, a la mode.

Another path to Wareham on the N bank follows, more or less, the River Piddle, a tributary to the Frome at Swineham Point. The flood plain at the confluence is wet and no place to search for other landings, but where accessible the stream seems shallow and probably too narrow to turn. A record 203 lb sturgeon was caught here in 1918, and a 23.5 lb sea trout in 1947!

And so the tradition is maintained, the town is the limit of navigation on the river, a sensible site for a bridge on the Roman Road from London to the terminus at Exeter, via Salisbury, Blandford Forum and Dorchester. There you could take the Fosse Way, and walk (?) direct to Lincoln, York, and to Hadrian's Wall!

King Alfred had the advantage, fortified the town in 876, and his daughter founded the Abbey used now as an elegant hotel on the river front. The Abbott's Wharf was for the ecclesiastics of the region and is above the bridge, whereas the substantial Town Wharf is below. Both were responsible for the country trade, that included candles made from oily Kimmeridge shale, until the boats of the time were replaced by new, but too deep for navigation on the Frome. It was best to develop Poole as a port, but there was nothing new about that for about 100 BC, Poole was a supply base for the invaders from Rome. The new port became dominant in the 14th Century and the Great Seal of Poole, 1325, illustrates a seriously fortified Cog to make the point.

Now it was high time to catch another lull between the gales, and how did the tides work in Poole? The 1st H/W is followed by the ebb for 1.5 hrs, and a flood for 1.5 hrs to the 2nd H/W; evidently 3 hrs after the 1st. The main ebb runs for 3 hrs, and then the flood for 6 hrs to the 1st. H/W!

The early morning on that day was of infinite peace. We drifted down about half-ebb to carry the tide well out of Poole and then to take the young flood home. All was tranquil, the great swell of the Purbecks rose easily above the saltings and you wondered at the Thames Barges, deep-laden with ball clay loaded at Ridge Wharf and how they were managed in the river; were they backed into that small pool to face downstream? There was no towpath so it was all topsails and poles and probably a small steam tug as the trade grew. Loading was simple with narrow gauge trucks down

Sunset over Poole Harbour

slope to Russell Quay where the channel came close to the shore. Arne Point is close, and Arne village was used as a decoy during WWII; not much has remained from two tons of bombs; just a tiny church, a Museum of Toys, and a tale of salt pans said by some to be fired by peat.

There, in the distance was Pottery Quay on Brownsea, and yet another tale to tell of a failed London Bank that had invested in a great works, using unsuitable clay! The superb ball clays were never found deep below the island, but there was some pure quartz sand, good for glass, and lots of pyrite nodules in the clay that had attracted Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor of England and a favourite of Queen Elizabeth. The pyrite was weathered to 'copperas', iron sulphate, for tanning, ink, and for Prussian blue, 1578. Selenite too, said in earlier times to be good for epilepsy when taken at the cross-roads by the light of a full moon.
Magic stuff, and scarcely a thought for the Port of Poole over there on the eastern shore, all full of masts on yachts big and small, the long-gone Newmans Yard and now Sunseeker, if you were keen on that sort of thing. The Fuel Barge was elsewhere, but of no consequence on that day. But Poole is a famous place, see the Customs House and the great anchor on the Quay! Remember, the fleet of trawlers to Dunkirk, the refugee diamond cutters from the Low Countries, and the gems that they carried with them?

Miles Philips had landed here a survivor from the awful tale of San Juan, the port for Mexico City. He was a page-boy in Hawkin's Fleet, age 13, and for 14 years he ran the gauntlet in Mexico, escaped to Guatemala, and eventually found a ship for Havana. He sailed with the treasure fleet to Spain but was recognised on arrival at San Lucar, but escaped again in Seville, walked to Cadiz, and took a Spanish galley to Majorca. An English ship landed him at Poole, age 27, February 1582!

Why not meet in Poole?

Trying to Keep Warm on Board

By Greg Manning A142

Sailing on a typical west coast summer day

Standing watch can be a cold, wet and a tad miserable task. With its long cockpit and whipstaff tiller the Atalanta is not well laid out to make getting into shelter easy. OK so we could have a spray hood but the boat already has enough windage in its topside and it would still be well forward of the helming position.

In conditions where the helmsman does not need to attend to other duties there is an easy option. Get into the rear cabin, put up the wash boards and close the hatch as far as possible.

Now I would have thought that Fairey being an aircraft manufacturer would have had a ventilation system that would effectively ensure a good airflow through the engine compartment, especially as it originally had a petrol engine where the build up of fumes could be dangerous. The labyrinth of ducts and holes that the air has to pass through is guaranteed to ensure that no air flows. (As every mechanical engineer knows jet and gas turbine engines have no oil seals in their hot bits but use labyrinth seals). The forward facing vents that one would assume would "ram" air into the engine compartment are also the highest and "Oh Yes" hot air rises thereby rendering these vents ineffective as the rising air meets the ramed air.

Sheltering in the warmth of the aft cabin

Sitting on the engine compartment cover during a cold night watch (with the auto tiller steering) seems the only way to use any of the heat from the engine to ease the misery. Not good for keeping a good lookout!

So as a trial "fix" to get some of the hot air from the engine to somewhere

where it might be useful, at a very low cost, A142 has been fitted with a 75mm bilge blower motor and a length of 75mm gutter pipe to suck hot air from the engine compartment and blow it into the rear cabin.

Ducting in place

The brown bit at the top of the picture is the engine compartment cover and the blower motor is forward of the red tape with a temporary switch to the right. The grey pipe goes into the rear cabin below the rudder cable bell crank.

In service this does not leave the rear cabin stifling hot but is better than nothing. Of course no one should occupy the cabin whilst air from the engine which may contain CO (that's carbon mon-oxide for those who did not do chemistry at school!) is being dumped into it. The effectiveness may be improved by blanking off the rear lower vents in the aft of the cockpit. This will be part of the 2013 trials!

Even if the helmsman/woman or person (delete which ever suits your level of political correctness!) is not benefitting from this mod it does improve the volumetric efficiency of the engine by lowering the temperature in the engine compartment. (Cold air is more dense than hot so contains more weight of Oxygen for a given volume).

Whilst this idea may not be the best, until someone comes up with something better……..

A Tale of Two Weekends
By Dinah Thompson

Weekend One
Mid May and I was booked onto a series of talks on herbs at Picton Castle, but the forecast was for some good sailing weather. Since that had been in short supply it seemed a shame to waste it, so we combined our interests.

We spent the Saturday evening onboard "Calista", on her mooring, enjoying a civilised dinner followed by a walk ashore with Lily. We landed on the hard of the little pill near the mooring, and went to explore the wooded and mossy valley which stretches from the upper reaches of the pill. The intriguing stone ruins at the top of the pill had us trying to guess their age and purpose, and we had a close look at the various boats laid up or abandoned ashore. There was one in particular, sadly neglected, but which had once been a smart little sailing cruiser. We would have shifted heaven and earth to own one like her when we first started sailing together. Sad to see her in such a sorry state.

Then it was back to "Calista" and bed. The night was cold, and we discovered that the heating did not work, because the battery was flat.
Sunday morning we were up bright and early, and emerged into the cockpit with our mugs of steaming tea to find a glorious day. The river was mirror calm with sea and sky merging into one blue expanse, bordered by the fresh green of the trees in

Calista in the East Carew river

their new livery. Not a soul stirred and there was not a breath of wind. We were the only boat moving on the river, and our only companions were birds, including a red kite which swooped overhead.

We motored upriver, passing the white tower of Benton Castle poking out of "Nutwood" (which would have been recognised by Rupert Bear), then past sloping fields of sheep on one side and steep ancient woodland on the other, past the village of Llangwm with its moorings and an-

Llangwm

cient tradition of river fishing, and then past the quay of Landshipping, the final resting place of A12. Still there was no wind as we turned off the main river and picked up a mooring off Picton Ferry.

We had made good time, and were soon in the dinghy motoring to the ferry hard. Lily was pleased to finally get ashore, and was only too happy to walk up the lane to Picton Castle. At the gates she and Trevor left me to return to "Calista", whilst I went in to attend the course. By mid afternoon, when the course had finished, the wind had picked up considerably and I was in danger of losing my Tilley hat. Down at the Ferry the wind was noticeably stronger, at least a Force 6.

Trevor eventually spotted my solitary figure clutching a basket of herbs, and came to collect me in the dinghy. Once I was onboard however he had great difficulty in pushing the dinghy off the lee shore into a depth of water where he could start the outboard, and managed to lose an oar in the thick glutinous mud. The ancient Seagull doesn't have reverse, which makes life difficult at times. Eventually we retrieved the oar, got the engine going, and started to make slow progress upwind to "Calista", only to have the engine splutter and die. No fuel. So back out with the oars and a strenuous row to "Calista". Once safely onboard, with my herbs securely stowed, we hoisted the sail, started the engine and motor sailed out into the main river, and then beat back down river to our mooring.

One feature of sailing on the upper reaches of the Daugleddau is that it doesn't matter how the river changes direction, bends and meanders, if the wind is on your nose it stays on your nose. The wind was cold, but the sun was out, and it was a cracking good sail, even with the sail well reefed.

Weekend Two

I had three days off work, so spent the first part of Friday sorting out my bees and gardening, and then in the late afternoon, with perfect timing, left to go down to the boat in torrential rain. Fortunately my new oilskins (a present from Trevor) did the job and I arrived onboard relatively dry. The same could not be said for Lily. We got everything onboard, put up the "conservatory" and motored downriver to Llanstadwell. This time we were not going to be caught out with insufficient battery power to run the heater!

Llanstadwell has a long pontoon for visitors, with soft mud when the tide goes out, so is ideal for Atalantas with seadogs that need to get ashore. Lily had a long walk ashore, and quenched her thirst at a stream. We had a comfortable (and warm) night,

Lily ready for another walk

only being disturbed by the wash from the Irish ferry and a tug.
We were up early to give Lily a walk ashore, before we set sail for Solva. We needed to be at Jack Sound, the narrow dog legged channel between the mainland and Skomer Island, for slack water.

When we got to the Sound the tide was still rushing through in the wrong direction so we anchored in South Haven for lunch and to wait for the tide to turn. You cannot land at South Haven, but it is a pleasant and popular anchorage, with plenty of wildlife to entertain you. Puffins fly past flapping their wings in a frenzy, whilst other sea birds with their longer wings don't seem to need to put quite as much effort into staying airborne.

At slack water we raised the anchor and went through Jack Sound comfortably and quickly. I always approach it with some trepidation after one passage through it several years ago with a strong tide in our favour but with frightening overfalls. Once through the Sound we found there was sufficient wind to hoist the sails and sail across St. Bride's Bay, passing a couple of large ships at anchor. Just a mile short of Solva the wind dropped, so we handed the sails and motored the final stretch.

We reached Solva near enough at high water so went straight in and picked up one of the visitor's moorings. "Ereina" (A9) had not been launched and so we could have borrowed Pete Crane's mooring further inside the harbour. However, we always find it a difficult mooring to pick up, and after previous embarrassing attempts, prefer the less sheltered visitor's mooring close to the entrance!

After supper we took Lily for a long walk up the Gribben, the headland with its Iron Age fort and wild flowers, which helps give Solva harbour its shelter. We then walked to the pub to meet Pete and Louise as arranged, but as there was no sign of them there continued to their house to chivvy them along. We had a convivial evening before walking back to "Calista". By now the tide had gone out so we had to carry the dinghy across the stream and beach to get back onboard.

Sunday dawned with a bright blue sky and no wind. We walked Lily, and then as the tide lifted "Calista" off the sand, got ready to leave. We wanted to be at Jack Sound again for slack water (2 hours after HW at Milford Haven). With little wind we motored across St Bride's Bay, reaching Jack Sound at 11 am, a bit later than intended,

Solva Harbour

with the tide already flowing through in our favour. There was a little bit of disturbed water, but it was nowhere near as bad as I had feared. On the other side of the Sound there was sufficient wind for us to sail, so we hoisted the sails, turned off the engine, and gently sailed along.

Lunch in the cockpit

We were sailing slowly enough to tow a mackerel line, but caught no fish. Initially the wind was gentle, but gradually it started to pick up. The mackerel line came in, and with wind and tide we were soon doing 6 knots over the ground. Inside the entrance to the Haven we looked at anchoring in Mill Bay (where Henry Tudor landed in 1485 on his way to the Battle of Bosworth), but decided that it wasn't as sheltered as Watwick Bay.

We anchored for lunch in Watwick Bay, in the company of another three sailing yachts and a motor boat. With the blue skies, sun, golden sandy beach, and the gorse and wild flowers on the surrounding hillsides it was idyllic. There were a couple of families on the beach, and some of the children were swimming. We couldn't believe our eyes, so checked the water temperature. At 13˚C it was however far too cold for us to go for a dip.

After lunch in the "conservatory" - there was a chill wind – we hoisted the sails, pulled up the anchor and gently sailed up the Haven. Just off Angle Lily started to whine. Recognising the signs we went and tied up at the pontoon off Milford and took her ashore. It was unbelievably hot, with people turning a not very fetching shade of red on the beach. By now the wind had died away, so the final stretch upriver to our mooring was done under motor. Whilst we were en route I made some Welsh Cakes to go with our afternoon tea.
We reached our mooring at high water, so we had carried the tide down from Solva to the mouth of the Haven, and then after lunch carried the incoming tide from the entrance to our mooring at Rooseferry.

It had been a relaxing weekend with gentle winds, we had met up with Pete and Louise, and had achieved what we had set out to do without any problems. It felt as if summer was on its way. Hooray!

A Year to Remember or Maybe Forget

By Colin Twyford A95 "Hiran"

2012 has not been a good year for sailing and a mixture of inclement weather and other obligations meant that I was not able to launch "Hiran" till the end of August. She was taken down the slipway at low water and then I realised that someone had placed one of the club's workboats on my mooring.

I decided to move it with the tender and outboard to its buoy downstream, but with a strong Westerly downriver it was wind against tide and took longer than anticipated, "Hiran" had lifted quite high on its trailer when we got back but we managed to motor on to our mooring with no problem, so we thought! As there was not time to have a sail, it was decided to come down another day, so 5 days later when I opened up the front hatch I found water in the fore cabin almost up to the bunks, we took out over 35 full buckets of water and discovered that there was a small *(thankfully)* hole just below the waterline on the starboard bow.

When she had risen up high on the trailer at launch she had drifted forward over the stem head stop, the wash had obviously bounced her on the stop and caused a puncture. The anchor and some 100 ft of chain was moved to the rear cabin along with many other items from the fore cabin. Mastic and a small piece of wood was jammed against the hole to limit the flow and two days later she came ashore for repair.

The club has a final race of the season in October down to the "Ovens Buoy" just past Gravesend and back, a distance of

Damage to the Bows

Ready for the veneer to be replaced

about 20 miles. It is always a popular and social race and having won it 3 times in the past I was anxious to try again. On September 17th "Hiran" was launched and all was dry, a shake down sail was had and on Sunday October 7th some 15 boats waited for the start of the race at 0830hrs, low water was predicted at 1130 hrs at Gravesend, but there was hardly a breath from the NE that day. We all drifted down river at zero through the water and 3 knots or so over the ground. Steering was difficult but the occasional breeze filled the sails and allowed some steering adjustments. The boats were bunched together allowing conversations and insults to be passed around. It was a pleasant if frustrating time as we passed under the Dartford Bridge *(2½ miles)* about 0930 hrs.

The tidal flow is quite difficult to judge as it wanders back and forth across the river according to the speed of flow and the bends in the river, so half a mile on as we were passing Stone Ness on the Greenhithe, Kent side of the river there was a slight flow of wind to give some bite on the rudder. After a few moments whilst we were watching the sails to take advantage of every puff, the helmsman realised that we were heading towards a large ship's buoy on the starboard bow, the wind disappeared and all steering went with it, so as I rushed forward with a boathook in vain, two tons of boat swept sideways at about 3 knots and struck the buoy on the starboard bow and instantly the water surged into the toilet area.

The fore hatch was open and I dropped down and grabbed a towel and a canvas bunk cover, jamming them down between the base of the toilet and the hole, which was like a small door about 9" deep and 7" wide hinged back to the first rib with splintered edges around it. The jagged edges prevented the hole from closing up and the water continued to pour in, I told the helm to steer for the Essex shore as that was the

nearest shallow water and we could beach on the falling tide if necessary.

At that moment I really thought we would sink and that is a truly horrifying feeling. However I searched around and found a fairly large square of canvas, tying a rope to two corners I lowered it over the bows and tied each side to the toe rails, then with a boat hook I was able to push the bottom of the canvas under the bow and the water flow kept it there, the inflow lessened and hope resurfaced. Calling up the club I told them of my situation and requested that they put my trailer down the slipway.

We were about 3½ miles from the moorings and the tide was flowing about 3 knots, so it would take us about 1½ hrs to return. I have a hand pump with a long hose and was able to pump water out of the fore hatch, once we had reduced the level of water with pump and bucket, fortunately it had not reached as high as the bunk tops and the mattresses had been removed to the rear cabin, we could relax when we were not pumping and have a cup of tea. It was fortunate that there were three of us aboard and when the club's rescue boat arrived and asked if they could take anyone off, I was very determined that no one would desert even if it was not a sinking ship.

Once back at the mooring it was low water and we had to wait some two hours plus to take "Hiran" out. With virtually no water flow to hold the canvas in position, the water was able to enter again so we borrowed the clubs emergency electric pump and were able to keep the water at bay. "Hiran" came ashore that same Sunday and needless to say, will not be launched again this year. Repairs are in hand and although I have had much experience with re-laminating over the years, this is the most daunting one I have attempted. There is a small double curve and the starboard rib has had to be removed as it was lifted and there was some cracking on the outer laminate under it, but progress is going forward and I hope to be able to complete in November and get a coat of paint on too.

The damage on the second occasion was only about 3 inches aft of the launching damage, I'm happy to say that the first repair was not affected by the second incident.

The buoy that was hit appears to be two large rounded half bins about 6 foot by 4 foot joined together on a rectangular plate about three inches thick, which protrudes a couple of inches at water level, we struck the corner unfortunately, otherwise we may have bounced off.

None of the boats taking part in the race were able to get round the "Ovens" that day, as the tide turned at 1130 hrs before they arrived, this was the first time this has happened that the club can recall. The race was re-run two Sundays later and as you can imagine "Hiran" did not compete.

I shall always carry a large sheet of canvas in the future and maybe members should consider this is good practice, but I hope that they never need it.

Being aboard when such a heavy contact is made emphasizes the strength of the construction of our Atalantas.

Extracts of an Outsiders Log
By Andy

As an introduction to this log I would like to set the background to how I ended up on Walrus for ten days sailing around the Quiberon Peninsular.
As it happens my family heritage is not nautical; relatives have all either been in the Army or Air Force. In fact the family line does not lead to great success as my Great Grandfather was torpedoed on HMHS Dover Castle returning from Malta during the WW1 and then during WW2 it is said that after the crossing during the D Day Landings my Grandfather was reportedly so sick that he didn't care if he was shot as soon as they landed. After this successful family trait my Father joined the Air Force and has avoided the Ogin ever since.
My personal exploits with floating vessels never really made much headway from my 3 star sailing badge on Toppers at the age of 12, so when the invitation from my girlfriend of 4 months was thrown out that we could go away with her parents for 10 days sailing around the west coast of France on Walrus, an over half a century old Atalanta, I jumped at the challenge (as it was obviously far to early on too show any sort of weakness or naivety to her interests).
So we departed from London at the crack of sparrows on a less than sunny July morning to join Captain Chas and First Mate Mandy who were already at sea so I will start the log from there:

6th July 2012
This morning I woke up feeling slightly under the weather. Amy was full of beans and eager to get going, I on the other hand thought that the early onset of Sea Sickness may have already taken effect due to the mind being a powerful creator of placebos. Unfortunately it turned out that it was not a placebo and the start of our holiday involved a slow 10 hour drive with food poisoning. Fortunately when we arrived at Port Du Crouesty the symptoms had subsided as to become initially acquainted with our new home in such a state would not have been desirable.
So my first impressions of Walrus was that she looked very pretty with her new coat of paint and varnished timbers that meant she stood out from all the fibreglass and plastic neighbours. Next followed the tour; first into cockpit and the explanation of the whip -staff akin to an old galleon then we entered into the galley where I was shown the newly fitted gas oven on a gimble, the change to the location of the old sink that now worked as a food preparation/navigation area and the fridge (also known as the step into the forward cabin), next the forward cabin

Amy and Andy braving the rain

which was seen to be a cosy space and finally I was shown the rear cabin where we would be spending our stay.
After a quick trip out to stock up on supplies of the required food stuffs and beverages we started to prepare for what would be my first voyage on a boat that didn't include the letters O and P in the name since my 12 year old days on the topper or day trips to France.

Amy recovering from Mal de Mare

Being that I work on construction sites on a day to day basis there is normally a variety of left over bits and bobs in the boot of my car. It was decided that from the selection we would require the rolls of gaffer tape, blue cord and an old Poncho, all of which we would end up using before the end of the day.
As we made our pre-departure preparations Captain Chas informed us as that there had been a minor incident as they had entered the port and an unexpected gust had torn the main sail, so we were put to work straight away using the blue cord to bind the reefed sail to hopefully contain the tear from worsening, the freshly painted silver boom fortunately matched the gaffer tape so from a distance there was no obvious repair.
After this we set off for the maiden voyage and as Walrus valiantly carved her way through some choppy surf I thanked the sea gods for letting me avoid my first potential Sea Sickness situation. We cruised around Port Navalo and into the inland sea before arriving at our first night stop where we sailed straight onto a buoy (apparently this was a demonstration of skill and nimbleness of the boat to not use the engine) at Ile-d'Arz and moored up for the night. The weather came in and the poncho was set up over the rear cabin to keep the occasional unwanted drips out, dinner was prepared and after a fair portion of the local red water sampled an early bed was required to prepare for the week ahead.

7th July 2012
Returned to the boat from a trip to shore and after initial squinting and speculating as we approached it became apparent that the worst was true; the gusting winds twinned with a flapping jib had resulted in its (not so early) retirement and the Genoa would have to be used for the rest of the trip.

8th July 2012
It may be July but it definitely feels a lot more like April. Today it has rained but this has had its benefits as the rain has brought with it enough wind to let us unfurl the sail and take to the sea. After yesterday's journey around the inland sea we have decided to take to the open sea and head across to

the smaller islands around the large Belle Isle. The crossing was an impressive departure of boats of all sizes heading out with the tide towards the mouth of the inland sea and out into the Biscay Bay towards the smaller islands. Walrus held her own keeping the larger boats in her sights as we hoisted the Genoa like a drilled team of professionals scampering around the foredeck without any problems. I followed the orders that were being called from all angles and after inspection seemed to pass muster on the first instant.

Amy and Andy on the beach at Hoedic

We had a pleasant sail across to the Ile d'Houat where the knowledge of cardinals and reading of oceanographic maps was taught and navigational aids explained; the rudiments which initially seemed complicated soon became clear as we spotted Mussel farm beds and markers on the end of headlands.

Once we neared the island of Houat we sailed around the East coast and came into a wonderful cove with a mile long sandy beach where we dropped anchor and established our base for the next couple of nights.

As we approached our chosen spot within the other boats in the cove I experienced what would be the first of many acknowledgements of the vessel that we were travelling in; a gentleman of years closer to ours if accumulated called across to us with a shout of "Ahoy" and with a smile that obviously took him back to his younger memories he exclaimed "Is that an Atalanta?". We all smiled back acknowledging him and his wife, nodding that it was. I think it's fair to say that it didn't just cross my mind that even with such a pleasant crossing the space aboard our 26" currently shared by 4 huddled against the rain behind the home made dodgers would have happily been traded for 20 minutes in the dry aboard his 36" tub with more space below than we had above.

After a swim around the boat and a wash in the galley using the solar shower*, we settled in for the night where some more whiskey and wine had to be drunk as we were lying low in the water apparently and it would save having to loose any ballast, or this is what we told ourselves anyway.

Poncho extending the aft cabin

*Solar meaning that it required the sun to heat so therefore it was what I will refer to as brisk and enlivening to save more colourful language.

10th July 2012
Even though it is the fourth morning I have still hit my head getting up. The rear cabin is a very cosy place and I have been sleeping really well with the gentle rocking. I am told that when the stars are out it is also a great place to gaze from through the open hatch but alas so far it is still raining.
Heeding the warning from a report acquired from the island port that the weather is due to change we made ready to set sail again.
This was to be my only bout of sickness aboard Walrus. As we made way and left the cove Captain Chas passed me the map and the hand held GPS with the instruction that a new waypoint needed to be saved.
A test of nerve and button mashing later led to success that was tainted by an intense green feeling. I can't make any comment about the rest of the crossing as my eyes remained fixed on the horizon to try and bring some sort of control to my rolling stomach.
After what felt like a life time we arrived bang on time at our new mooring on Hoedic sailing in expertly with the high tide that we required. We had rounded to the south of the small island (around 1mile end to end) and entered a small man made walled beach that had a few other boats already in residence. Fortunately one spot remained vacant between a larger fishing boat and another sailing boat so we lined ourselves up for the gap. First Mate Mandy was sent below to (wo)man the keels and Amy and I took to the bow with the anchor. The keels were lifted to all but a few turns and the anchor dragged up the shore and dug in using the tender paddles. We then took to pulling fenders under the belly of the beast to protect from rocks and waited

for the tide to go out. After only about an hour we were beached and then ran out the secondary anchor behind to prevent ourselves moving further up the beach and settled in for the next few days.

Chas and Mandy sampling the vino

12th July 2012
I am learning that life aboard the boat requires a laissez faire attitude to be adopted where Walrus time replaces any normal comprehension of time. The simple act of living onboard involves endless hours of tinkering and the completion of countless small jobs. Once you have added up the time dedicated to the removal of water from places it shouldn't be by trusty sponge and ingenious pumps, the regular fixing of the tender outboard, the delicate task of establishing the exact position that the starter motor needs that gentle tap to start the main engine, the cyclical manoeuvre of deploy dodgers and rain cover - take down rain cover – deploy rain cover (repeat as rain dictates), searching for lost shoes that set sail on its own the previous night, collecting drinking water and beach combing there is very little time left in a standard day.

13th July 2012
So today was to be our last main sail. We departed from Hoedic and rounded the East coast and headed into Port Du Crouesty. Soon after we left the weather came in and with the sail up and the engine ticking over should we get into any trouble I was left in charge of the whip-staff and sailing back towards the mainland. Unfortunately Amy fell foul of the bobbing and soon disappeared below to lie down and sleep through the crossing. Fortunately I think if I wasn't looking for cardinals on the horizon in the gloom I would have been in the same boat (so to speak). As the weather deteriorated it was decided that there was no point in us all getting wet so Captain Chas monitored our progress from the galley leaving First Mate Mandy and I in the sowesters to steer us back to the safety of the main land.
As we approached the entrance to the port at around midday, Captain Chas re took charge and sailed in for our penultimate night onboard. Once moored up we took stock of what was still dry after the crossing. By now the sun had come out so we quickly turned all the rigging and any other space possible into a washing line to the dry off kit. To any onlooker Walrus must surely have looked like a floating gypsy caravan. As we took stock and relaxed over a glass of wine pontificating what we had achieved with the day a visitor came by saying that he recognised Walrus from her days at Bosham. This was to be the first of three passers by who claimed to have seen her in Plymouth and Chichester. After the first visitor went on to inform us that he used to draw the Atalanta as a boy I truly began to comprehend the age of Walrus and appreciate how her mature years would require a watchful eye and constant tinkering to keep her going.

14th July 2012
To make the most of our last day on the boat

we sailed out of the port and back into the inland sea where we were treated to a sea breeze that perfectly matched the capabilities of the fixed main sail and Genoa. The result of which was a fantastic day of sailing whilst watching the locals race around the small islands. Keeping with the tradition of the trip so far we dropped anchor off an island, this time a small one which was also a nature reserve and swam to shore to explore and partake in some beach combing. After a while we returned to the boat and enjoyed a few more glasses of wine and a quick bite to eat before heading back to Ile-d'Arz to catch a local band. Unfortunately as we made to set sail we realised that we had missed the tide and it was decided that we had best stay put for the night. Keels lifted slightly and with our renewed efforts to reduce the ballast again due to our predicament we settled in to what turned out to be a fantastic night of fireworks from all angles as it was Bastille Day.

15th July 2012
The final day and an early departure to drive back home, nothing more to report until next time (hopefully there will be one!).

Meal Diary for the Stay:
The new edition of gas oven (dometic gas three burner) onboard rewarded us with fantastic catering all week:

06/07/12 – Seriously tasty French Sausages
07/07/12 – Roast Chicken and Roast Potatoes
08/07/12 – Beef Bourgignon
09/07/12 – Slow Roast Pork Belly
10/07/12 – Salmon Fillets
11/07/12 - Cassoulet
12/07/12 – Pork loin with Apple
13/07/12 – Super Charged Salad – boiled eggs, lardons, new potatoes, croutons…the works!
14/07/12 – Some more Sausages

"Pimp My Atalanta" A17 Gambol
By Simon Garratt

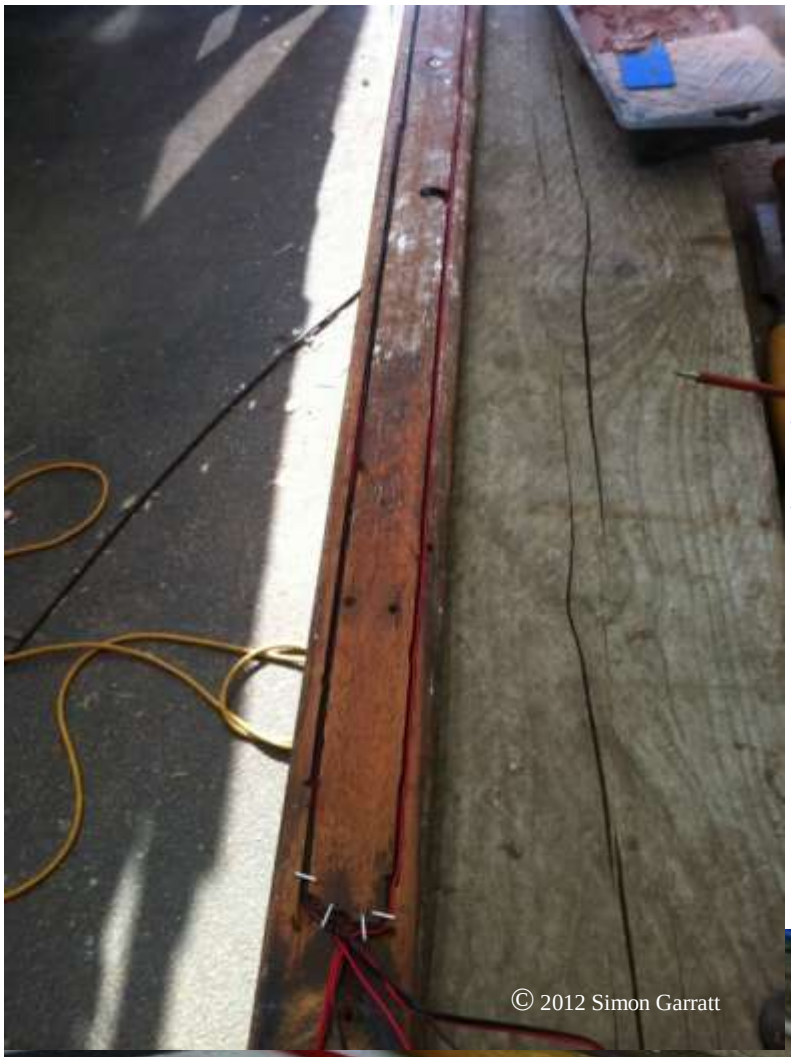
I am not sure when (or if) this became "a good idea". However, as I was already removing the aft toe rails to repair veneer damage to the port side under the aft cleat, and to reseal the toe rails an idea formed…

I decided to inset 4 blue Ring Automotive leds (purchased from Maplin) into the underside of the toe rail. They were flush fitted into a hole (though the "bulb" part looks like a water droplet hanging down when finished) made with a wood bit using a drill stand to ensure an accurate depth and a groove for the wire was routed into the outer part of the underside of the rail to preserve its strength & to be watertight.

The wires were led back aft so they could pass through the deck just forward of the cleat & could therefore be sealed in place by the toe rail. The leds & wires were set in place with West epoxy filler.

All wires for each bank of 4 leds were connected together under the deck head and then to the main fuse board & protected by a 1amp fuse (as leds use very little current).

Led ready to be epoxied into place.



Cable routed into the underside of the aft toe rail.

Damaged top veneer removed.

Resplendent? Finished result

A17 Gambol Haslar Marina, summer 2012 with "chav" lights on.

West Mercia –A race too far for Tammie Norrie

By Ian, Jayne, Katie and Rebecca Pollard

We had repaired the top six foot of the mast at Easter, prior to a short adventure that combined spring sunshine with hail and torrential rain, around the East Yorkshire coast. What promised to be a great season ended up with what seemed like 10 weeks of rain and, although mooring at Goole only cost £16 per week, I would have rather spent it on paint !

So, after repainting topsides, and replacing all 8 wheel bearings (some had completely disappeared and disintegrated after only 2 years –so we need a better maintenance and washing regime in the future) a relaunch and a plan to spend 2 weeks of a family holiday sailing across the Wash and to the East Coast Race via Great Yarmouth and maybe the Norfolk Broads. Ambitious, in length of journey, time on board with a family of four, and the fact that my wife was a very nervous and reluctant sailor and the first time on the sea for her- a big gamble.

Sunday 19th August: A warm, light easterly breeze took us (at 9 am high water), on a 7 knot flood tide, pushing us at an exhilarating 10 knots on the G.P.S. towards the Humber bridge. Bacon sandwiches and a glimpse of summer sun was a welcome start to our big adventure.

Katie and Rebecca [9 and 11] loved the excitement of recreating 'Titanic' impressions on the pulpit or having a go at helming. Grimsby was a welcome sight, eight hours and 45 miles later, a long but satisfying sail, with great facilities and a vibrant friendly down to earth community of the Humber Cruising Association who run the marina in the shadow of the old fish dock. The Humber can be a very challenging place, with strong tides at springs, lots of twists that make for interesting tacks, occasionally some really big vessels and some very shallow, shifting sandbanks off the well marked buoyed areas. Even G.P.S. and digital maps cannot beat a 1970's echo sounder and lifting keels as the low tides are very low at springs -as we scraped the mud at least twice when we should have been well into clear water!

Tuesday 21st August: After a well earned rest, we set sail for the 60 miles to Wells on the North Norfolk coast across the Wash with a light breeze and a flat sea, two hours to Spurn Point was perfect. However, best laid plans …. When the wind dies I keep

Crossing the Humber Estuary

reminding myself that the Yanmar 10GM would benefit from an extra cylinder, as 5 knots becomes 2, with a bit of tide. Luckily we had researched a bolt hole. Saltfleet is a tiny seldom used inlet, 15 miles north of Skegness, with a shallow snaking channel –perfect for Atalantas!

With a featureless, flat coastline and only homemade buoys for a couple of local fishing boats, it was difficult to see a way in, at 3 hours before high water. The latest channel is 300m north of the map position, but the Atalanta is great at dealing with shallows and with the aid of anchor, engine, boathook depth gauge (and patience when we ran aground) we were soon in for a free mooring next to a pub with toilets.

A true hidden gem, well worth another visit and ample shelter for an ensuing, frightening, thunderstorm– what a crazy British summer!

Wednesday 22nd August: After sleeping on the slant and waiting for early morning high water we meandered through the pretty saltmarshes on the way to the route through the sandbar and deeper water. Once out of the shelter of the channel we soon realised that the coastguard report of 16 mph winds was a little cautious as we raced to windward at 5+ knots against a very gusty force 4 coming from the southwest. The only issue as we raced towards Skegness was that I was unable to put the rudder down fully so steerage was very difficult. This was even more problematic as we headed in a south easterly direction with gusts of 30 mph winds and very lumpy 1 metre waves broaching us on the starboard side – no bacon sandwiches today!

9 hrs later, after 43 miles of exhilarating but arduous sea conditions, we reached Holcambe Bay where we tried to find shelter enough to anchor whilst awaiting a high enough tide to be able to navigate a treacherous sand bar and a narrow mile long twisting channel into Wells.

14 hours, soaked to the skin, with 2 very sick children, and we were able to safely moor up in the darkness.

Tuesday 28th August: After such an exhausting crossing Wells was bliss. A sleepy land that time forgot seaside village. With enough interest in nooks and crannies, quaint little shops, 2 excellent chandleries and lots of little inlets through the old marshes teaming with wildlife – we loved Wells.

The girls spent most of the mornings crabbing and the old Atalanta became a tourist attraction with the harbour tour guide operator. After much debate we realised that it was better to enjoy the moment rather than try and push on for the race, especially as the weather was very changeable and unpredictable.

Finding a weather window with enough wind in the right direction but light enough

Secure in Saltfleet

to give a comfortable ride we decided on an early tide that would get us to Grimsby for the next high tide in daylight. Unfortunately it was still dark as we waited as long as we dared after high water. Best laid plans! Not all the buoys were lit and as we crept along the channel we missed the dog-leg and found ourselves scraping the keels on a sand-bank. Since we were only 30 metres away from the lit channel we lifted our keels and rudder and decided to continue on our short cut. Hindsight is wonderful! As the light came up we realised that we had run aground only 8 metres away from deep water. To save our embarrassment we decided to go back to sleep and wait for the next high tide. At 11 am a knock came at the side of the boat, it was the harbour master from Wells asking if we were ok.

Aground in the entrance to Wells harbour

He said, "you're not the first and you wont be the last as its such a tricky way out". At this point my wife had had enough and decided to take the girls and go home by **any** mode of transport other than a boat. I was left to make the rest of the journey on my own.

Arriving at Grimsby at 4.30 am on the Wednesday morning. Solo across the Wash was inspirational against the gorgeous sunset, eerie listening to the clank of the Bell of the Inner Dousing buoy, scary with the busy containership traffic in the Humber and problematic trying to work out the entrance to the Fishdock against the glare of the City lights.

Lessons learnt

- You can make a home made self steering gear out of a cleat and 2 bits of rope
- 2 gallons of diesel over such a long series of journeys is economical but without wind 10 HP is a little small
- Even with keels up Atalantas CAN get stuck and it's better to retrace your steps than plough on regardless
- A small search light would be very useful
- If you're trying to introduce your family to the joys of sailing short journeys of not more than 20 miles would be a better start before attempting a long crossing
- It is useful to use a variety of sources of weather information such as passage-weather.com

Would I do anything differently?

A Review of the modifications I have made to Aquilo over the last six years
By Richard Hall

This year I have not been afloat. This is partly due to the Olympics, Portland Marina being closed from 1st July until 16th September. I am very seldom ready to go afloat much before June and the weather put preparations on a go slow. So I thought I would review the various improvements I've made to Aquilo over the years, and see if, in hindsight, I would do anything different.

I suppose the starting point is to define the boat I wanted. I must admit seeing Rob Woolley's blog of why he chose an Atalanta got me thinking. Why did I choose an Atalanta in the first place? Here's my list: -

- She must be able to be stored in the barn when not being used.
- She had to be able to be towed
- She had to be able to be launched and retrieved
- The mast had to be able to be raised.

All without external help.

She had to be easy to maintain, with the minimum of painting, probably GRP.

- She had to be big enough for my wife, Carol, (a lifelong land lubber) to feel safe and secure while we were sailing. She also insisted that she would veto any with cabins that made her feel claustrophobic.
- She had to be fun to sail.
- She needed, virtually, to be able to be sailed single handed, by me.

This meant there should be little chance that I would fall overboard, which in turn meant I shouldn't have to go on deck once at sea, regardless of what needed to be done.

She also needed to have a reliable engine to get her out of trouble and to ensure we would always arrive at our destination.

The Atalanta met most of these criteria.
Carol did not veto the accommodation. She had with lots of GRP boats!
She was a little large, but was built to be towed, albeit with a Land Rover, and she could be rigged and launched, and she would store in the barn, almost. (The bows stick out!)
She is certainly lovely to sail.

But she was wood, so I was very concerned about the amount of maintenance required.
The old petrol engine would need to be replaced with a modern diesel.
The launching and retrieving would need to be looked at because she was so high on her trailer that the Disco would be well under water before she floated!
Most of the operations could be performed from the cockpit (or rather in the main cabin doorway).

Fig 1: The new engine installation

However Carol was too short to operate the mast winch.

Aquilo was also short of a rudder blade.

I needed to rectify all these so that Aquilo would come close to being my ideal boat. The old engine was easy to remove because of the large hatches above it. I went to the Southampton Boat Show and ordered a Beta Marine BZ482 13.5 bhp twin pot diesel with a shallow sump, and got a reasonable discount. After a fair amount of measuring, I altered the engine bearers, cleaned everything up and did a repaint job.

The engine, which incidentally was slightly lighter than the original petrol engine, was lifted up and into place using the anchor chain attached to the top of the "A" frame in the barn with the main sheet attached to a suitable link. This enabled me to lift the new engine up over the side deck where it was then pulled inboard using the jib sheet with a pulley attached to the side of the barn. I could do all the adjustments from the cockpit, locking them off with suitable cleats and winches which were ready to hand. A further line in the fore and aft direction enabled me to adjust the engine accurately over the engine bearings and I could lower it into position.
The engine is positioned with a slight bows down orientation and by adjusting the anti-vibration mounts it was lowered until I could just get a piece of cardboard between it and the hull. This was as low as I could get it.

Of course the drive did not align with the propeller shaft, but I had allowed for this as I was going to use a car drive shaft with two constant velocity joints to take up what is a considerable misalignment.

Why is it that gearbox manufacturers make gearboxes with the drive output lower than the input drive when it really needs to be higher?

In fact I used the wheel bearing and hub attached to the constant velocity joint to act as my thrust bearing for the prop shaft. The whole lot came off a Lada Samara that I was scrapping.

This had to be perfectly aligned with the prop shaft, which was quite a fiddle and required several alterations to the steering arm on the wheel bearing. Then I had a link piece made that fitted onto the four wheel studs at one end and to the propeller shaft at the other. The prop shaft had to be shortened and a new metric taper made so that the new propeller could be fitted as unfortunately the engine rotated in the opposite direction to the old engine.

The exhaust had to be completely replaced as the new one at 2 ins diameter was much larger than the old one. I bought a glass fibre silencer which fitted just aft of the engine with the exhaust going out of the engine bay to starboard under the starboard cockpit seat, where I bent it up and over and down again so that it could then run along the side of the bunk. Thus the "swan neck" normally fitted just inside the stern was effectively the curve of exhaust tube under the cockpit side seat. This meant that the exhaust was joined at the engine (somewhere close to the waterline), at the inlet and outlet from the silencer (both below the waterline), and then again at the stern outlet (above the waterline). This kept the number of joints down to the minimum, especially those below the waterline.

In a similar vein, the cooling water's inlet was aft of the engine and the pipe led directly to a water filter placed just about at the waterline (which was as high as I could get whilst still being in the engine bay). It was then fed round to the front of the engine into the water impeller (below the waterline). After passing through the engine heat exchanger it went again under the side seat in the cockpit, this time to port where high up a line was "T"ed off.

This was only half inch copper pipe which

was further reduced before passing through the side of the hull. From the “T” the main water pipe was fed back into the engine bay and into the exhaust elbow. This “T” section performed two tasks. Because the outlet was well above the waterline it would act to stop the water being syphoned into the exhaust, when the engine was not running. And when it was, it was easy to just look over the port side of Aquilo and check that some water was coming out.

It is much more difficult to crawl aft and look over the stern where the main volume of water was coming out of the exhaust. In the main I am very happy with the propulsion system. The engine does exactly what a boat engine is required to do. It starts first time, every time and pushes Aquilo on in a solid and reassuring way. If we ever get into trouble I know the engine will get us out of it. The constant velocity joints work, although the forward one gets a little hot if Aquilo is pushed hard for any length of time, due to the considerable change in direction. The propeller I chose was a little small and cavitates when the engine revs exceed 2,500. This limits the top speed to about four and a half knots. I just can't get the full power of the engine into the water. However a smaller prop means less drag when sailing, so it's not all bad. That's the engine sorted.
Fig 1 shows the engine and drive shaft fully fitted. The engine is as far forward as it can be whilst allowing 6 ins space at the front for changing the water-pump impeller. You can just see the forward CV joint between the hatch supports with a green plastic tie around the cover. The aft one is in front of the rusty hub which is in front of the black adapter attached to the prop shaft.

The white silencer is to port of that with the exhaust crossing over into the space under the starboard cockpit seat. At the forward end you can see the grey hatch cover with cut outs for the water filler cap and the associated fresh water cooling system. The top of the hatch, when closed is about 4 ins above the cockpit floor. The whole engine apartment makes little inroad into the cockpit floor.

Now the next thing I needed was a rudder blade. I could not readily find a source of aluminium of the correct grade, so I toyed

Fig 2: The wooden rudder blade

with the idea of a wooden one, using ply that I already had. The end result was a blade of nearly the same size as the aluminium one but with straight edges and more importantly, as an aerofoil. (details in the 2007-2008 Bulletin)
How has it worked since I built it in 2007? Once it's fully down, it's never caused me a moment's unease. Aquilo performs well with it and she turns like a dinghy. When it's partially down it's a different story.

Aquilo is much more difficult to control and the helm is so heavy. This is not normally a problem as the blade is always fully down. The only exception is when I launch and recover Aquilo. This is a pity as it's one of the times when control is paramount. The problem is the rudder is too deep. With Aquilo on the trailer the rudder touches the ground before it is fully down. I cannot be certain that it will not touch ground when I am launching. As I am going backwards at the time there is no possibility of the blade being pushed up, instead it will be pushed further down. Not a nice thought stopping two tons with the bottom of the rudder blade. Once, when I was recovering Aquilo, I thought I could leave the rudder down whilst I was manoeuvring her onto the trailer and then lift it before pulling Aquilo up the ramp. Unfortunately I forgot. The bottom of the rudder blade hit the concrete ramp. The blade tried to lift and the old clam cleat I was using on the blade down-haul shattered. I'm thankful that it did, because I'm not certain what else would have broken. I use rope for both the down-haul and the up-haul for the blade and clamp them on the inboard emergency tiller stub. A lot of stress would have been put on these areas before something broke! Needless to say the bottom front corner of the blade was badly worn, but easily repaired with epoxy resin. Otherwise the blade seemed none the worse for its contact with concrete!

The photo shows the wooden rudder blade after five seasons use. The gate behind is a normal farmyard gate so you can see how big the blade is. The waterline is level with the large (2 ins) hole, so the blade goes deep into the water (49ins). Although a different shape it is no bigger below the stock than a standard aluminium blade. The rudder blade is facing towards the camera and you can see the shape of the streamline below where the bottom of the stock would be. It also shows how it extends forward of the pivot line which is just forward of the rope down-haul. This gives a light but positive feel to the helm.

The blade fits into a standard rudder stock with the stock cheek fitting between the small rounded top piece and the larger central piece. The blade pivots on plastic inserts in the 2 ins dia hole with a new 10 mm hole drilled through the aft end of the stock (the only change to the stock).

Because of the way Aquilo behaves with the streamlined rudder blade, I think the rudder blade could be smaller. I wish now I had made it 75% its current size. This would mean the blade would be 30 ins deep by 15 ins at the top and 7.5 ins at the bottom. I would need to keep the maximum thickness about the same. This would require a thickness ratio of 13.3% instead of 12%, but this is well within the recommended 12 – 15 % range.

This would mean the bottom of the blade would be just over three feet below the waterline and some 20 ins below the bottom of the propeller, sufficient I would have thought to keep the rudder below water in any conditions. The advantage would be that the blade could be fully down whilst Aquilo was on her trailer and more importantly while she was being launched and retrieved.

The ratio of the rudder area (including the skeg) to the sail area should be in the range of 1% to 2% with a mean of 1.4%. With either the Aluminium rudder blade or my wooden one, this ratio is nearly 2%. With the ¾ rudder blade I am proposing this would drop to 1.25%, which would be more

Fig 3: The modified trailer

reasonable.

The rudder blade would still have to be removed while towing as there would still not be sufficient clearance to ensure it didn't hit a bump in the road.
I have never felt I should revert to an aluminium blade, and I've been out in quite large seas and in winds up to force seven.

The next important change was to make Aquilo capable of being launched from her trailer. As with most Atalanta trailers, Aquilo rode high on her trailer. The main problem was the height at the bows. This needed to be significantly reduced as this would be the last bit that floated. By removing all the crosswise supports from the trailer apart from that below the cockpit aft bulkhead, the bows could be lowered by about 8 ins. This meant that as long as a five foot bar was used between the back of the land-rover and the tow hitch on the trailer, Aquilo could be floated off with only the rear wheels of the vehicle being just in the water.

This is just about acceptable. It would be better if Aquilo could be lower. This was not easy to achieve with the current trailer as Aquilo's keel rested on the main cross-member adjacent to the wheels. (see Bulletin 2009 – 2010).

There are several points with this design of the trailer: -
Aquilo sits on two main places on her keel, the first between the main bulkhead and the cockpit forward bulkhead and the second some three feet forward of the main bulkhead. An additional keel support is provided at the bows. For sideways support the underside of the aft cockpit bulkhead sits on pads on the aft cross-member of the trailer.
This is the only sideways support for Aquilo. However Aquilo is so stiff there is no tendency for the hull to twist. As this support is also at the very back end of the trailer, the trailer itself does twist quite a bit. This requires sufficient clearance between the hull and the trailer mudguards. This again limits how low Aquilo can be.
Every inch lower that Aquilo sits on the trailer means the Land-Rover can be one foot higher up the ramp when Aquilo floats

off. This assumes a ramp slope of 1 in 12 which is fairly normal.

An immediate decrease in height could be achieved by using wheels with a smaller diameter, two inch smaller diameter would lower Aquilo by one inch. The trouble is that smaller diameter wheels do not ride so easily over bumps. If I was building a new trailer I would work hard to try and lose another four inches. Also the main maintenance problem is the brakes and wheel bearings, which, of course, get submerged at every launch and retrieval.

I'm trying to think of a way of stopping water getting into the bearings. I did read of a system which allowed the road wheels, axles and brakes to be removed simply and the trailer was then lowered onto a set of launching wheels which were permanently attached to the trailer.

This would seem to get rid of all the problems of launching straight off the trailer. The boat would be much lower, the wheels, axles and brakes would not be immersed in sea water. When the launching wheels rusted they could be replaced fairly cheaply.

Fig 4: The system for handling jibs from the forehatch

The trouble is I can't think how to do it! So I have left the situation as it is. The technique I employed for aligning Aquilo when retrieving her relied on the fact that she has twin raising keels. These have to be aligned with the top of the two "V"s in the back of the trailer. These are 11 ins wide, so that's how accurate I have to be. To help I use a set of lead marks clamped to the top of the tower on the trailer at the front, and by standing amidships and squinting past the mast I can, hopefully, keep the marks aligned until the keels locate in the "V"s.

This is not too easy as Aquilo must be moving very slowly and as the rudder blade is partially

up the steering is not too precise. With a head wind things are reasonable, but with a strong crosswind it is hard to stop Aquilo from crabbing sideways. It doesn't help, of course, that the keels are a long way up so she doesn't have much of a grip on the water.

However I've never not been able to recover Aquilo.
Overall the trailer works satisfactorily.
Fig 3 shows the trailer without Aquilo. At the back of the trailer you can see the two "V"s into which I have to fit the twin keels as I guide Aquilo onto the trailer. As the keels ride up Aquilo is brought to a stop beautifully aligned central to the trailer ready to be winched fully on.

Fig 5: The roller for moving the mast

Just in front of the "V"s are the two rows of "V" rollers for the keels which keep Aquilo central to the trailer as she is winched fully onto the trailer. Further forward are the two main keel supports with the bow support just aft of the winch tower. (The winch tower is not in the picture). The mudguards are removable so that there is little to damage Aquilo if I totally miss the "V"s.

Moving on to my next modification which was concerned with the moving of the mast so that it could be raised. I devised a wheel which fitted on the horse and allowed the mast to be moved aft from its stowed position. (see Bulletin 2008/09). This has now been used for four years and it does all that I hoped for. I don't think I would change it at all. The photo shows the wheel.

The last modification I made to enable me to operate Aquilo single handed, but with Carol at the helm, was a method of raising and lowering the jib without leaving the fore-hatch (see Bulletin 2010/11). This involved re-routing the rope jib halyard back down the fore-stay, so that the jib can be easily raised and lowered whilst standing in the fore hatchway, and then cleating it off using the large stainless mooring cleat at the bow. The jib luff is then tightened using a 6:1 Cunningham.

This works incredibly well, I feel extremely safe standing in the fore hatchway whatever Aquilo is doing, so I can use both hands to control the jib while raising or lowering the jib. The only slight niggle is that the stainless steel cleat allows the luff to slacken slightly as the pull increases as it really is too large for the size of rope. It would have been better to have a jamming cleat on the bottom block so that the halyard could be readily cleated there. It would also leave the main mooring cleat clear in case it was needed suddenly. However this slackness in the luff is easily rectified by going forward (below deck, of course) and re-tightening the Cunningham.

The photo on the last page shows the Cunningham at the bottom of the jib. The larger blue rope is the jib halyard coming back down by the forestay with the block which

could have a jam cleat attached to avoid cleating the halyard off over the top of the mooring warps.

Finally I made a modification to the sides of the keel boxes where the keel bolt covers are located. This was necessary as the cover's screw holes were getting well worn. The modification (see Bulletin 2011/12) utilised plywood annuli glued to the keel box with screws sticking out to take the covers. These were then held in place by nuts which I tighten using a box spanner without a cross bar. This seems to be tight enough to ensure the covers don't leak.

The advantage is that I can remove them every year and tap out the keel bolts, well the two uppermost ones anyway. Then I can clean the bolts and the tubes, re-grease and replace them for another year. A simple procedure to ensure that everything there remains OK. Again, in practise, they work fine. I only wish I could shift the lower keel bolts, but that's another story (see Bulletin 2011/12).

Fig 6 shows the annuli glued into place but without the cover plates. The top bolt (pink) can just be seen sticking out from the keel case. This bolt position does not have an annulus and shows how worn the screw holes are (bear in mind that the keel case is only ¾ ins ply). The bottom position shows the bolt (black) fully home while the forward position has no bolt. The shiny bit is the inside of the bolt tube attached to the inboard side of the case.
So far I have not touched on the maintenance of Aquilo.

I bought Aquilo in June 2004. I spent two years getting her ready and she was launched still without a boom on 17th September 2006. During this period I painted the decks and the cockpit. I did not paint the topsides which were still in very good condition having been professionally spray painted quite a few years earlier.

Since then I have not painted anything apart from the anti-fouling, and a bit of varnishing (I actually used stain) on the toe rail. I think the main reason, apart from the use of modern paints is that she is stored undercover and more importantly out of the sun except when she is being sailed. So my fears about general maintenance have proved groundless.

Overall I am very pleased with my modifications although in my dreams I would like to go back and try the changes to see if they would really improve Aquilo even more.

Fig 6: Captive bolts for the bolt access covers

West Mersea Regatta
by Jane Stearn

This regatta is always a very joyous occasion, one of the highlights of the AOA year, but sadly very under-subscribed.

For the last few years there have only been three entries. The Atalantas race in a class called "Classic Yachts-Slow Division" and even in that company come last!

So to add a little zest a few more would be good and there are many more advantages.

Read on.
I will start with the day before. The Met Office did its best to discourage us with wind strengths predicted to be "Force 5-7. becoming 8, perhaps Force 9" It looked a bit glum.

When A183 Bluster, home port R.Deben but making this the last day of a short cruise, arrived she was met by the welcome sight of A31 Zambra, already moored to the piles with Nick and Peter Runekles and their friend Luke on board, so they braved the complexities of the pile mooring together. The third entry, Mike Thorley`s A141 Rakia had her own mooring in West Mersea. When there are several close together we can do some mutual inspection. It was a rotten wet evening.

Race day. By some miracle the storm had not yet arrived (it never did) and we had a breezy westerly Force 5 instead. Bluster and Rakia made it to the start line, but no sign of Zambra. This was sad because there was obviously some mishap. Later we heard this was a rope round the prop taking too long to unravel to enable them to join us.

That left Bluster and Rakia. Bluster did not make the best of starts, but seemed to be unaccompanied by her fellows. More mishaps. Rakia made an error with one of the limit buoys and also had not been able to discover what course the Atalanta had to take. This is displayed on a board on the side of the committee boat but in the melee is hard to see.

Knowing this it is transmitted on the VHF, but you do need to have a set to receive it!

The sail itself was a joy. The smacks are a wonderful sight and there were boats of all shapes and sizes sailing on the estuary. In the circumstances the result hardly needs stating, but we all enjoyed the sail. Mike had his son Matthew and John Ingleby as crew, and Jane had a friend Carol, and Nick Phillips who has taken over organising the race from Norman Dorrington.

In the afternoon water sports are held which are usually well worth watching but were marred by the heavens opening to a thunderstorm. Then off to the dinner and prize giving. Crews buy their fish and chips and BYO drink, and everything else, including hot and cold desserts and a cheese board, are provided in abundance by Sarah Thorley. A71 Blue Jackeroo had hoped to race with us but was hampered by the engine but the owners, Terry and Lisa Greatrix, joined us for the supper. Incidentally, any member is welcome to come to this gathering.

The evening was completed by an absolutely fabulous firework display. This is an annual event but as this was a Jubilee regatta the firm employed to do the fireworks was the one that did the Olympics and the result was mind blowing. Do think about it for next year.

Not more about ****** Keels!

By Greg Manning

When we bought A142 over 10 years ago one of the documentation that came with her was a copy of the original Fairey maintenance schedule. It states that the keels should be removed annually. Yes, that means every year! Now that is hardly surprising, the most optimistic owner can not expect the mechanism to survive under salt water with out some regular husbandry and TLC. If this is not done then it is not surprising that some of the reports in the AOA bulletin are true and owners are resorting to beating their keel mechanisms into submission with large inappropriate hammers or hydraulic jacks!

Oh, at this point I ought to include a disclaimer lest I be excommunicated from the AOA! "Nothing in this article is intended to criticise the excellent Repair Manual produced by Trevor Thompson".

The first year we found the keels had to be removed anyway as the rear of the keel boxes needed replacing. We (that is Roy and Greg the owners) bought a second hand chain hoist (a new one can be bought for not silly money from the likes of Machine Mart). The boat was slung using the apex of a neighbours portal framed farm building as a lifting point. Luckily A142 has original sling points that are both kind on the boat, as the weight of the keels it taken directly on the sling and easy to control. Now is that safe I hear the cry, well what is the weight of 9 inches of wet snow on a roof? I wouldn't sling the boat when there is the 9 inches of wet snow on the roof though! Then the fun began and although we did manage to get the keels out OK we realised that it would be a good idea to obey the law in future. That is the military law of the 7 P's. Proper Prior Planning Prevents a P*** Poor Performance! So before we removed the keels again we set about making the task easier and, dare I say it, safer for the future.

Firstly we made a cradle that fits under the rear bulkhead. The profile was taken from our trailer. We had bought a new trailer

A cradle for the aft bulkhead

Wheeled trolleys for the keels

Bow support

from RM Trailers of New Alresford who had an original Fairey drawing for a trailer that takes the weight of the keels directly onto the trailer, very kind on the boat. We like being kind to our boat!
Next we made a trestle to go under the bows so the boat could safely be off the ground with the right amount of working space to get the keels out. How much will be explained later.

How that reindeer got in on the act we do not know!! The sling can just be seen above the boat and we leave it on when ever we are working underneath. Belt and braces!

Note however that with the keels removed the boat does not hang level when lifted using the sling. Care has to be taken when lowering the boat onto the trestles as once the weight is on the rear trestle further lowering results in the trestle being unbalanced unless the stern is lifted to keep the boat level at the same time.

In order to safely handle the keels next we made some cradles. The design is clear from the pictures. For any owner not having a concrete floor to work on it would be better for the base of the cradles to be skids. Now what about all these things we made. Total cost, minimal just a few bits of mild steel and basic welding skills. Even if they were made at the local agricultural engineers the saving of time and the risk of injury or damage to the boat easily justifies their cost when they are used regularly.

So how to remove the keels:-

1. Gently lower them to the ground.
2. Take the weight of the forward end on the normal lifting mechanism.
3. When a neutral point is found, and having removed the round cover plates and keel bolt nuts, gently tap the pivot bolt (that's the bottom aft one) out using a wooden drift. As they were well greased before being put in they will slide out easily.
4. Using the normal lowering mechanism lower the keel all the way down onto the cradle. Note the height of the boat on its cradle and trestle is the height of the keel plus the height of the base of the cradle. Also note the underwater grease that is still on the keel from when it was last fitted.
5. Now the keel is safely on its trolley disconnect the top of the yoke from the lifting mechanism and fold the yoke down and wheel the keel away. The other two keel bolts can now be removed and the brake plates allowed to drop down onto a piece of old carpet.
6. Job done.

Replacing is the reverse of removal, and most of the task is logical common sense except it should be noted that the keels will tend to move forward once their weight is

The keel is easy to get in and out this way

taken on the boat's lifting mechanism. In order to stop this, start with the keel aft of its final position and try to restrain it as it is lifted. If it does swing too far forward lift it back to the rear using a bar under the back of the keel where it touches the ground. Alternatively use a pry bar and suitable protective piece of wood between the keel and the front of the keel box to push the keel aft.

The task of inserting the pivot bolt is made very much easier if a tapered collar is machined to fit over the threaded part of the bolt so that it centres the plates and keel as it is wriggled in. This has already been suggested in AOA Paper F. It is mentioned here as it has been found to be a very effective.

Oh and remember, a tin of under water grease is cheap compared to the time and effort of removing badly corroded keels and mechanism!

Whilst on the subject of keels we are in the process of removing the keel mounting structure from A142. We found that lengths of 10mm threaded rod passed through the bolt tubes were ideal for pulling each structure clear of their respective boxes. As the ends of the tubes extend into the boxes a 3inch length of 1inch box section on the ends of the threaded rod and tightened against the tubes was enough to break the seal and allow the structure to be removed.

It was necessary to have a shorter length on the pivot bolt tube with fittings on the end that bear against only the diameter of the tube as access to this tube is restricted by the structures. This method is simpler and gives a more even pressure than having to obtain a suitable bottle screw and using it on each tube separately as is mentioned in one off the AOA technical papers.

Must stop here as I will suffer excommunication!

The best laid plans ..... Or an enjoyable alternative

By Jane Stearn

"Where are you going for your summer cruise Jane?" " Hopefully west, but if that does not prove possible, then France" The forecast did not look hopeful, citing strong south-westerly's all week, putting an end to getting as far west as possible in the nine days at our disposal. Second choice France.

The crew arrived on Saturday, July 28th. armed with Euros and passports and hope. I boarded Bluster, only to find the waterline trailing long weed despite a recent scrub. It has been even worse than usual this year, whether due to the weather or the new make of antifouling I tried. A quick scrub was necessary, ...carried out by Oliver. If there is a horrid job to be done, Oliver is your man. See later.

Now we were ready to depart with a boat in good condition and a stong crew consisting of me (forget the strong bit), Jonathan (son and expert sailor) and his two student sons; Robbie the academic and another good sailor, and Oliver, the ever cheerful and ever willing inventive one.

Sunday, July 29th. HW Harwich 0821, HW Ramsgate 2118. Forecast SW4/5, 6 at times. This meant neap tides making crossing the sands half way not possible so we opted for the outside route and entered the waypoints accordingly. It was not to be an easy passage. We rose early and had a good breakfast, not knowing when the next meal might be and crossed the Deben bar at 0826. the first bit on this route is a reach so we made good progress in a reasonable sea but a rising wind.

By 1040 a reef became necessary. Bluster has roller reefing and three rolls is about equivalent to one slab reef and that is what we put in. Either boy can do this remarkably quickly, lifejacket on and clipped on the jackstay with a short length, which is very helpful. The wind continued to rise, force 6

by now and hard on, so at 1320 a second reef was put in. With the stronger wind came rain and greater waves. I cannot say it was ideal but we were getting there. For sustenance we relied on digestive biscuits and lime squash. No-one was seasick but I nearly was after a spell down below for the heads. It is alright for the blokes, although by now it was far too rough to go fore or aft.

Then at 1350 it was time to tack and things calmed down a bit. Also we had a good wind shift to W5 and let out one reef. We had to get round the Long Sand, and possibly the Kentish Knock and west was lovely. A quarter of an hour later we let out the remaining reef but another quarter of and hour after that up came the wind again, on the nose. and in went the reef.

The weather was miserable and we still had a long way to go. This is further than the route you can take at Springs, and it was obvious we could be out all night tacking against such a strong wind with a beam tide. Help was necessary so on came the engine (not a very big one) and we progressed slowly with the mainsail to help.

We made a long tack out until we reached the edge of the chart, and then another long one back. Visibility was good all day and now we could see the Kent coast quite clearly but on this day curiously unreachable.

This route takes you near or through endless wind farms. This was the first time I have actually sailed through one but they do get in the way. The next two hours were not exactly great but the land did get nearer and morale rose. Not that it had ever been too low. After all, France beckoned. At last, at 1900, we rounded the North Foreland and basked in the shelter of the land.

Of course the tide was strongly against us, but we knew it would be .Another disadvantage of the neaps route. Off went the engine and we revelled in the blessed peace. Then, to cap it all, the wind died away and for the last mile or two the peace was shattered.
Unbeknown to me, it was Ramsgate Week. A routine request for a berth resulted in the information that we were lucky, there was one berth left! I felt somehow perhaps we deserved it.

It was getting dark by now and a weary crew moored up in Ramsgate harbour. We had made it! I suppose then weariness was caused by the sea conditions because we did take turns for an hour off and a kip down below, but it had been hard work. We finally sat down to supper at 2200hrs. That journey, sailing on a good day and a Spring tide, takes between ten and twelve hours (for Bluster). This one took fourteen. Never mind, on to France.

Monday, July 30th. HW Dover, 0928, 2201. Forecast, SW winds with a strong wind warning.

The hope for today was Boulogne but the tides dictated otherwise, so Dover it would have to be. Quite helpful really as it would give time to get in some fresh food and set us up for what we hoped would be a more comfortable Channel crossing. The sun shone and Ramsgate was buzzing.

There were some fine boats racing including many Dutch, and some German, French and Belgian. For them conditions were perfect. During one race there was an MOB and out raced the lifeboat and a helicopter. It must have been quite difficult and frightening in those conditions and I am glad to say he was safely rescued.

At 1410 we left our mooring, all clean and showered and well fed to face whatever the sea would throw at us today. We still had the one reef in so left that and put up half a jib to beat down the 15 miles to Dover. An hour later in went the second reef. Still in the shelter of the land Bluster was going like a train and it was an exhilarating sail.

Half an hour after that the wind was still rising and we realised that once we turned the corner at the South Foreland we would lose the shelter of the land and the wind would be head on and we just would not make it.

Bluster beating to windward

This was crunch time. Deciding to go back is so, so difficult, however necessary. Goodness knows what the wind strength was on the way back but it necessitated a third reef and a pocket handkerchief of a jib, and still we flew at 6.2k. Bluster`s hull speed is 6.5k. Bt 1710 hours we were back and luckily they still found room for us in another berth It was three hours of wonderful sailing but not exactly productive.

Over a welcome cuppa we set up our council of war. The five day forecast said these conditions were set to continue all week so it was goodbye France.

How often these days are we defeated by the wind. It is definitely a more frequent occurrence than it used to be, and my log books will bear that out. We had six days left and it was up to me to make them enjoyable. They had come a long way for this cruise. They wanted sailing. No bus-pass cruise was in order. They were all very philosophical about the turn of events and fell in readily with my suggestions. So we celebrated the sunshine and the holiday and the fact that the old boat had behaved so well, sitting in the cockpit, glasses in hand and nibbling prawns, olives and nuts.

Tuesday, July 31st. Forecast SW5/6, 7 at times.
Not a day for movement. There were odd jobs to be done. There always are on Bluster. The boys went into town and Jonathan and I at last solved the problem of getting the hand-held Garmin to record the time and position on the VHF. This facility could be vital in an emergency and had been plaguing me for over a year, in spite of several conversations with the ever helpful chap at the Garmin headquarters. The call is free and you get a real person to talk to. In the end they exchange my set, although I had had it for a few years and, bingo, it worked. A fantastic service. In the afternoon we plugged a laptop into the Olympics and watched some brilliant riding, rowing and sailing.

We also had three proper meals! The rigging was howling round us, the sun shone and we got quite lazy. These meals are not exactly simple affairs as the boys are vegans and the facilities are two burners on a paraffin stove and no oven or fridge. Vegans are very strict and a slug found in the lettuce had to be put in a polythene bag with a lettuce leaf to be taken ashore and released in a nice, slug-friendly spot. If the cooking arrangements sound a bit primitive I assure you it was interesting, if rather slow. The waiting time was leavened by a plentiful supply of alcohol. It is amazing how much beer a student can put away with no apparent effect.

Wednesday, August 1st. HW Ramsgate 1151, HW Harty Ferry 1235
Getting up at dawn is never my favourite occupation but needs must and once the cosy bunk is left the worst is over. Everyone was brilliantly punctual and Ramsgate was at last left behind at 0500hrs. The wind was still in the SW but had moderated so out came the reefs and we plugged away past the Thanet coast guard station against the strong tide that is usual here and could not be avoided if we had it favourable along the Overland route.

This means we had to recourse to engine help and it still took 1hr50min.to cover the five miles. As it was low water we had to keep a close eye on the depth round the North Foreland where the rock ledge extends as much as three and a half cables in places. Once round we sailed; full sail and no reefs, well sheltered all the way by the long straight coast of Kent. First we passed Margate, then Westgate on Sea and then Birchington as we traversed the South and Gore Channels.
This is where it gets tricky and woe betide you if you go this way without having corrected your charts this year. The Margate Hook Sand has extended and the channel between the Hook Spit buoy and the East Last has silted up and is closed. You would want to go through here if you were making

for Sheerness but our route took us south along the Copperas Channel.

Two buoys are in place but the Reculver Sand, where Barnes Wallace tested the Bouncing Bomb to blow up the German dams with great ingenuity reminiscent of Heath Robinson, has extended northwards and the whole area is now very shallow. The buoys are not very helpful and we had to devise out own dog leg route. With a fair wind. And plenty of strength to wind up the keels in a hurry if need be it was just a fun challenge and all went well.

The destination today was to be Faversham, up the river and said to be a beautiful old town and a place as yet unvisited by Bluster. Turning into the Swale meant a long tack but we had time to make it before the last chance to make it up to Faversham before the water left. There is reportedly a marina which was duly contacted on the VHF. First a girl answered and said she would get a man to ring back. Said man, goodness knows who he was, rang back to say you cannot come, we are full up and anyway there is a lot of barge movement at the moment.

Disappointing as Faversham was part of our revised cruise plan. So we continued up the Swale towards Conyer which was to have been our destination for the next day. Low and behold the VHF came on again. This time it was the harbourmaster who said of course you can come, we have plenty of room. We never got to the bottom of that one, but to turn back would have made us to late to get in so we lost out on Faversham.

Conyer also dries and has a limited time for entry but time was well in hand. and luckily I had a detailed chartlet of the approach that I had sent from the Conyer Marina years ago but had never had the occasion to make use of. Coming from the east as we were it is fairly straightforward.

The harbourmaster sounded welcoming and gave rather garbled and complicated instructions as to what we would find and where to go. Conyer is an odd place. To port were several new blocks of flats which sounds awful but was attractive, and to starboard saltings where our acquisitive eyes immediately spotted samphire. We found our berth but no-one came to greet us which could have prevented our future problems. We tied up to a finger pontoon and prepared to settle.

The boys set off by dinghy to get the samphire for supper, with strict instructions to be back before the water left. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon and picking samphire is sort of addictive. You always see just another lovely piece you must pick. You can guess the result.

The next wallow has a little water left so they manoeuvred in there and jumped up. pulling a very muddy dinghy after them which took much cleaning as there was no water around to help. Every bucket had to be carried from the tap a distance away.

While this was going on we realised that Bluster was settling to a steep side of mud. The wallow we had been allocated was obviously for a large boat and if we had been told we could have positioned Bluster in the centre. As it was we continually lengthened the warps as she slid down the side and the eventual angle was not too extreme. But the worst was yet to come.

When we thought we were truly settled she slid further and the fore starboard fairlead came under such pressure that it was pulled out of the deck, backing plate and all. Yet more trouble now emerged. The keels and rudder had been raised and the transducer removed , which is all you usually need to do, but not this time. The mud at Conyer is incredible; very soft and very deep. Owing to the way she had settled the rudder had dug in deep and was fully over to starboard, bearing the weight of the boat. It is an aluminium rudder and it was obvious it could

not take that strain for long before it fractured. It had to be dug out. This is where Oliver became the hero.

Standing on the transom ladder he scooped up fistful after fistful until he could reach no more, and it was still stuck fast. Theref was no question of getting into that mud. You would sink without trace. Defeat was not an option. So up with a galley floorboard and with one foot on that (it still sunk out of sight) and one on the ladder he finally cleared the rudder and saved the day. The state of him had to be seen to be believed. Somehow the mud was on everything.

Well over an hour later, after endless journeys to the tap we had a clean but damaged boat, a clean dinghy and a clean Oliver. Time for the pub, but not before starters of samphire on Bluster. All the way we walked past large blocks of flats. There is very little village and the only shop is a quarter of an hour's walk away. Definitely a holiday location, with a large drying marina with full facilities.

Enquiries yielded the information that the boat owners come from far and wide, even as far as Manchester, because they love the remoteness. The pub is very old with a recent and sympathetic restoration, lovely, friendly people and super food. Being a vegan in a pub can be difficult but the chef specially took all the non-vegan ingredients out so the boys survived. I had a most beautiful piece of fish.

So ended rather a memorable day for three of us but Jomathan volunteered to get up at 0300hrs. To reposition the boat. This worked well except that we were now too far from the pontoon for alighting. At least it was for me.

Thursday, August 2nd. HW Sheerness 1332

The earliest you can expect to get away from Conyer is two hours before high water and the only those with shallow draft will make it. That gave us all morning to lick our wounds and for me to repair the boat. You can hardly sail with a gaping hole in the foredeck. So how did I get ashore? Many, many, years ago I designed some boards for the cabin seats, with four possible uses. These are strong planks with cross pieces on one side, and upholstered on the other.

By day they act a back rests which makes sitting really comfortable, and by night they reverse as leeboard which makes the bunks very snug. Mooring between close piles can be difficult but slung from the side of the boat with upholstered side inwards they bridge the gap beautifully. They have proved their worth for all these uses. Now was the time for the fourth so far untested use; as a gangplank. It worked a treat.

The yard was very helpful and cut me a piece of plywood to my specifications and would not charge for it. The repair looked reasonable and has remained watertight, ready for a proper repair in the winter.
The boys set off, on foot this time, to stock up on samphire. Oliver said he could live on nothing else until we pointed out he would be rather hungry most of the year. The samphire was at its best. It varies a lot with location and the time of year.

A31 Keel structure and operation

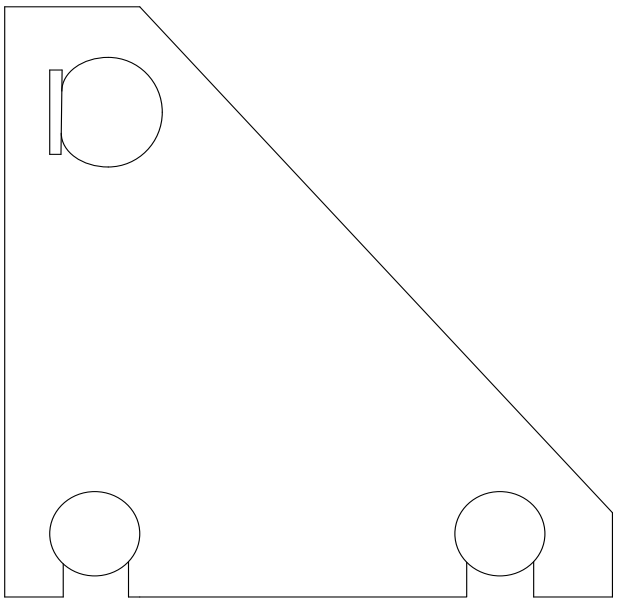
By Bill Kennaway

The aims of this article are to explain the structure and operation of the Atalanta 31's keels including keel bolts, clamps and hydraulic lifting gear, and to outline the restoration work that was carried out on A31/6 Caperdonich in 2008-9.

The article also seeks to fill in some of the gaps in information about A31 keels arising from the almost completely undecipherable Fairey Marine A31 keel assembly drawings in the AoA's archive.

The configuration of the A31's keels share many common features with the 26' Atalantas, which are admirably explained in the AOA Keel Maintenance Manual by Trevor Thompson, hence this article concentrates on the those features of the A31s that differ from the 26's.

This photo shows the configuration of the A31's keel plates and keel bolts out of the boat. We epoxy painted the keel plates, but the bolts were in very good condition and only needed cleaning up.



A31 keel pressure plates

The upper keelbolt has a splayed edge that locks against the vertical raised bar on the outer keel plate.

Not shown on the photo is the 4mm thick stainless steel facing plate to the ply keel box, against which the inner mild steel keel plate is clamped. This has holes for the keel bolts and the 12mm galvanised bolts securing the stainless plate to the ply keel box and main internal keel framework

Pressure plates and bolts assembled outside the boat

The above (not to scale) diagram is a view of the keel plate and keel bolt heads from the outside.

The cast iron keels pivot on the forward lower keel bolt.

The upper keel bolt is the only one that can be extracted in the same way as the A26, i.e. outwards through a circular hole on the outer face of the ply keel box. Extraction of the oth-

er keel bolts on the A31 is achieved by first of all removing the upper keel bolt, and then, having supported the keel itself, by jacking up the keel plates clear of the keel bolt heads and pulling the keel bolts through internally.

This is a recent photo of A31/6's internal keel frame structure.
Each of the steel tubes housing the keel bolts is fitted with a grease nipple. These worked fine and were retained.

A31/6 had no seals between the keel bolt heads and the end of the steel tubes housing the keel bolts.
I was persuaded that the greasing of the tubes would be enough to prevent significant leaks - this proved correct for the first two sailing seasons, but the leakage is now increasing so I will be investigating options for some kind of seal arrangement

A31/6 did not have any anodic protection to the keel frame or keels, so a heavy duty wire was run from one of the keel frame bolts to the main anode on the outer face of the hull, and a pair of round anodes was bolted through the lifting hole at the end of each keel.

Fairey Marine fitted the A31s with both electric and manual hydraulic operation of the keels.

On A31/6, very little of the original hydraulic equipment other than the control valves and hydraulic header tank had survived earlier restorations. The hydraulic rams and electric hydraulic pump looked to have been sourced from construction plant, but worked very well and so were retained. However the manual hydraulic pump had been omitted, so we decided to replace this

A31 keel pumps and ram

Electric pump and battery

This photo shows the electric hydraulic pump, which is bolted to the main bulkhead, with its battery below, connected by a 60A circuit breaker.

The pump was a Smiths Industries model, which worked well but leaked badly around the joint to its reservoir – we managed to sort this by having a new flange welded to the old reservoir, painted red in the photo. New metal hydraulic pipes and rubber flexible hydraulic hoses were fitted, but the clear flexible hose arrangement from the top of the pump to the header tank was retained to provide a visual check of the level of hydraulic fluid in the system

Acknowledgement is due to AOA member Martin Bennett, who did the survey of the boat when I acquired A31/6 and who provided invaluable advice throughout the restoration, and to Gus Curtis of Kings Boatyard at Pin Mill who carried out the heavy restoration work

as a back-up against loss of battery power.

One important piece of information that we did extract from the A31 record drawings was that you need to check that the hydraulics are pressurised before lowering the keels, as otherwise the impact of dropping the keels under their own weight can severely damage the keel structure.

This photo (on the previous page) shows the hydraulic ram in red, alongside the stainless hydraulic header tank – the latter being a matching replacement for the original tapered shaped steel tank that leaked. Below the header tank is the hydraulic pipework leading to the manual hydraulic pump, with its lever arm, and with the diverter valve between manual/ electric operation above.
The flexible hose from the base of the header tank goes to the electric hydraulic pump, to the left of the ram.
We initially fitted a Dowty manual hydraulic pump that had been re-cycled from the cab-lifting mechanism of a lorry. This worked well but became increasingly leaky, so we replaced it with a new unit.

Dowty are no longer in business, and the replacement pump has an over-size reservoir – you can get these units without a reservoir and this would have been better, as I think the header tank has enough capacity and the Fairey drawings show the manual pump with no reservoir

Inland Ireland

By Trevor Thompson T10

Phase 1: Wales to Ireland on our own keels

18th July 19th July 2012

The usual last minute rush, to get ready for a long trip, saw Peter Crane and I motoring down to Neyland to fill fuel and water tanks, stock up on fresh food at Milford Haven, and finally stowing the inflatable dinghy. Unfortunately Calista, having been in the water since before an early Easter, was in need of a scrub – and due to work commitments this still needed to be done. So we spent the night at anchor in Dale poised to scrub on the morrow.

An early tide and we were sailing by 0630, under full sail and anchored in Sandy Haven by 0715, waiting for the tide to drop. The bottom was duly scrubbed and the log transducer cleaned, and we were ready for the tide to return well before the tide was. We were back in our anchorage at Dale by 1830 – fully prepared to make an early start for Ireland.

20th July

A good forecast, lots of 3s and 4s with the occasional 5 in places and with a distinct North Westerly flavour, and we were away at 0500. Aware that we had a narrow window of weather before strong westerlys returned at the weekend we were keen to keep the speed up. The wind remained light all day and although we spent some periods purely sailing the engine was also providing some effort on and off all day. Probable more on than off! Brilliant tide timing (all done with computers I hasten to add) enabled us to take full advantage of the 7 knot spring tides and pick up a mooring in Dunmore East at 2045. One major section of the trip completed on schedule!

Phase 2: Up the Barrow Navigation, 23rd to 26th July

I suppose you need to know that the Barrow is only partly tamed, and there is either not enough water to float canal boats or so much that none of us can motor against the flow. So it was with some trepidation that we motored and sailed up the estuary to the point where the River Barrow turns off to New Ross, and the bridges start. We had the mast secured on deck by lunchtime, the first time I had lowered and stowed it while afloat, and motored up with the tide to the marina at New Ross. It was at this point that Ireland took us under its wing, and the magical experiences commenced. We met the marina manager, John Dimond, who just happened to the THE man so see about getting into the Barrow Navigation. We spent Sunday weather bound in the marina, and wind against tide is a force to treat with respect here, before leaving on Monday morning to make for St Mullins lock. John advised us on the dangers of the passage, and the timing to get under the bridges (balancing depth of water against air draft), and met us at the sea lock to work us through at 1015. He also arranged for a rov-

Approaching New Ross

Motoring along a weir on the Barrow Navigation

We made the trip from New Ross to Athy, which is the length of the Barrow Navigation, in 4 days. We had our share of damp weather along the way and in fact the 24th started with drizzle and ended in a downpour – and us still plugging away working locks in the pouring rain. Pete insisted on doing the bulk of the lock handling, which we were doing ourselves (because we liked the independence of doing the work ourselves). The scenery and wildlife were pretty wonderful, and the riverside towns interesting. One of my observations about this trip is just how little I knew about Ireland – I mean its towns and districts. We passed through towns, large and small, including Balytiglea, Carlow and Athy – I have to admit that I had no idea they even existed before this trip.

The Grand Canal connects Dublin to the river Shannon, via a southerly route through the great Bog of Allen, and has a branch going south following the upper reaches of the River Barrow (The Grand Canal Barrow line) to connect with the Barrow Navigation

ing lock keeper to meet us at the next lock, and for us to buy a lock key at the next town. Really we would have been a bit lost without his help!

We worked our way steadily against the current, avoiding rocks marked in the guide book (well most of them anyway), from lock to lock. Leaving each lock there was a section of canal, often full of weed, and then we were out into the main river skirting a weir which curved away to our side so that we were looking over the weir as we motored past it (most unnerving) into the river itself, the current usually not strong to begin with (2knots?) but getting stronger as we approached the next weir (perhaps up to 4 knots) until we could only creep along against it, and the next lock chamber was sighted with relief.

Our first evening on the Barrow was memorable, being invited to the home of a local narrow boat owner to join his family and friends for dinner.

Working locks on the Barrow Navigation

at Athy. It was with some relief that we passed the last weir and actually entered the Grand Canal Barrow Line! We discovered as we went along that the Barrow Navigation had only just been reopened after the water had gone down before we arrived, and was closed again shortly after we left it! Very few boats seem to use the Navigation!

Vicarstown on the Grand Canal, Barrow Line

Pete and I spent a convivial last evening in the "Bridge House Inn", a real Irish pub, alongside the canal. Pete then took a train and ferry home while I did the washing and waited for the next crew.

Phase 3: Through the Grand Canal 27th July to 6st August

Dinah and Lily arrived on the overnight car ferry, and we spent the day exploring this traditional market town, and unpacking. The mast had been stowed in the normal position on the raised main sheet track for the Navigation, where air clearance was limited, but Pete had helped me raise it onto a set of specially made crutches which allowed the Bimini (which converts into a tent) to be used, while still being able to pass under the bridges (2.4metre clearance). We set off along the canal 8km along to Vicarstown, where I got out a folding bike and went back for the car. We used a plank as a boarding ladder and tried to train Lily to walk up and down it to get ashore (with some temporary success). On the canal proper we rarely worked our own locks, but had the keepers do the work for us.

Not a boat to pass for days—then two at once!

Next day Dinah drove to Monasterevin and walked back to meet me in the boat motoring towards her. We arranged to leave the car here for a few days, and continued our leisurely way north, sheltering from the showers under the cockpit cover/bimini as we motored along. We turned left towards the

Moored in the town centre at Edenderry

Shannon as we met the Grand Canal Main Line, and enjoyed wonderful views over flat low lying land as the canal crossed the dried out bog on an embankment. We spent a night at Edenderry, a mile along a side canal in a basin in the heart of the town. A harbour that could hold 40 boats and not another boat in sight! The next night we tied up at an abandoned pier about two miles outside Tullimore. The theory being that it was better to be away from the city centre! Next day we walked into town and found the railway station. Trevor caught a train and walked the rest of the way back to the car (in pouring rain), so that Dinah would be ready to go back for the overnight ferry on the following day.

Two days later the next crew, Cathy arrived and we resumed our journey west to Shannon Harbour, the junction with the River Shannon itself, which we reached on the 5th August. In this western end of the canal we

The canal basin and abandonned canal hotel at Shannonharbour

Sightseeing at Shannonbridge

found a lot of weed, made worse because it had been cut and left, forming a 3 inch thick raft in and around the locks. The engine water intake required constant attention!

Phase 4: Up the Shannon 6th to 8th August

We entered this new phase with some excitement, not knowing how fast the stream would be or just what to expect. Passing through the last double size lock we were pleased to be out on open water and free from the weed of the last few days, passing numerous hire boats going both ways. The current seemed slight, perhaps 1.5knots, and the river wide, certainly a lot wider than the Thames. We also went for miles without coming to a lock! We tied up at Shannon Bridge, went ashore for shopping and sightseeing, before going on to Clonmacnois, a historic religious site, where there were pontoons to tie to overnight.

The next day we went on to Athlone, a major regional centre and city, where the next crew change was due – hopefully after some sailing on the lake. As we were leaving the lock and passing through the busy bridges in the city centre the water impellor failed totally and the engine overheated, leaving just enough time to grab hold of a pontoon ("no mooring here" of course) as we passed. Once the engine had cooled we motored the few feet up current to a proper berth in the town marina. We located the railway station, and enquired about chandlers (the spare impellor was no where to be found of course), and were about to cycle off the next morning to find an impellor

The Shannon at Athlone, approaching the weir and lock

Lough Ree Sailing Club

when a local boat owner insisted in taking us in his car.
By the afternoon we were mobile again, and we motored off north into the southern edge of Lough Ree where we anchored near local yacht moorings to raise the mast. The mast was secure and sails bent on before tea, and the afternoon was so hot that we were tempted into the water to swim. The lake water was 23 degrees centigrade!

Phase 5: Cruising Lough Ree 8th to 22nd August

We then enjoyed the best few days weather of the whole trip, light winds, sunny skies and very warm days, while we explored the small Loughs at the southern end of Lough Ree, ate in the cockpit and used the Bimini for its primary purpose. During a relaxing lunch in a sheltered bay we were approached by a rib. It was the Commodore of Lough Ree Sailing Club – this was the last night of their Regatta. Would we join them for the BBQ. They were crowded with visiting boats but could find room for us. How could we say no? So we moored stern to on the end of a row of motor cruisers, and were introduced to the Shannon One Design, a rather splendid planked racing dinghy from the 1930's, and one of the world's oldest sailing clubs, and most definitely one of the world's friendliest.
Calista was left here in the care of the sailing club while her crew went home by train and ferry, Cathy north via Holyhead and back to work, and me south via Pembroke Dock to collect the next crew, car and trailer.
Two days later I had both sons, Alex and Magnus, on board, the car and trailer stored at the sailing club while the members were away on Lough Derg for the second week of their regatta, and we went off sailing. Over the next week we sailed up and down Lough Ree, looked into the various small harbours, and had our attempts at BBQ's foiled by rain. We did enjoy the tranquillity, and exploring the uninhabited islands and bays. We found the ruins of famous monastic settlements, abandoned medieval towns, ruined castles as well as villages and towns, and we enjoyed some splendid sailing, in winds strong and light, with both sunshine and rain. Many of the small harbours on the Shannon waterway (including the Loughs) have free moorings, on quays or in marinas, with showers, laundries and electricity laid on. The showers, laundries and electricity are charged for by swipe card purchased from local shops – but are very reasonably priced.

Perhaps this is the place to also state that the canal fees, including use of lockkeepers, and over a month's overnight mooring came to £30! However we did go through 2 water pump impellors!

Phase 6: Recover onto the trailer and home by ferry

All too soon it was time to retrace our steps to the south of the Lough, pick the car up and take it to Quigleys Marina, and have Calista recovered by travelhoist onto her trailer. A day's driving across Ireland reminded us just how far Calista had travelled, and we spent the last night at the ferry terminal, using Calista as a caravan, ready for the next day's lunchtime ferry home. All too soon we had Calista laid up in her boathouse ready for her skipper to rush off back to work - skippering sailing school boats!