Atalanta

OWNERS ASSOCIATION BULLETIN 1984 – 85

26th EDITION

ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION
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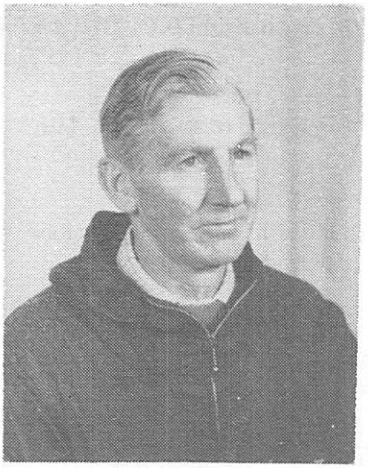
ALAN VINES – PRESIDENT 1958 – 1983, PATRON 1983 – 1984.



As most members will be aware, Alan Vines died in February 1984 following some years of failing health. We extend our sympathy to Mrs. Vines and the family, by whom he is greatly missed.

The A.O.A. owes their existence to him (and their boats!). He had faithfully supported the Association, providing advice and encouragement throughout. So far as I am aware, he had attended every annual dinner except that of 1984. We will miss him and his apparently bottomless mine of information, advice and stories. We will not forget to "carry a sweep".

Hon. Editor

COMMODORE'S MESSAGE

We had a sad start to the year, in the loss of Alan Vines. An appreciation of him is included in this edition. We are delighted to welcome Joan Vines as an Honorary Member and hope that we shall see a lot of her.

One other personality I should particularly like to commend to you is our Editor, M.D. Rowe, who has produced the Bulletin with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of competence for so many years. We are deeply indebted to him.

W.O.

HONORARY EDITOR'S MESSAGE

My thanks to those who have contributed this year. A bumper crop of photos were submitted: my apologies to those whose photos we do not have the space to include. This is in extreme contrast to last year, when not one was submitted. Please keep them coming! One plea – if you submit an article with a sketch, please send the original or a VERY clear copy. Otherwise, I am obliged to redraw it. I will return originals if so requested.

ALAN VINES AND THE ATALANTA

Following an apprenticeship with the Cowes shipyard of Samuel Whites, Alan Vines moved to Saunders Roe as a draughtsman. Their assembly shed is still to be seen at Cowes, but now as B.H.C. He joined Fairey Aviation in 1934, moving to their Stockport factory. In June, 1936 he married. He became manager of the wartime shadow factory there, later becoming Chief Production Director of Fairey Aviation in the period 1946-55 and finally reached the position of Chief Executive. He retired in 1971, but his fertile mind continued its operations: he was forever thinking of new things, such as a window catch set complete with fixing template – still in use. A close friend and former colleague described him as an "artistic, engineering boffin". Another colleague said that he could always be relied upon for a novel approach to a problem, whether aeronautical or nautical. His first love was boats and much of his life's work was in aircraft, but with other considerable involvement in anything with an engineering or sporting content. If both were involved, then so much the better!

His was an Island family, as was his wife's and spent much time sailing, a lot being with Uffa Fox, both members of the Island Sailing Club and both at the time sailing International 14s. He later was near Olympic qualification, being in the last 20 candidates for the 1948 single handed races in Fireflys and was frequently in the prize money at Ranaleagh. Apart from sailing, he enjoyed many sports – hockey, tennis, golf (6 handicap) and took up Polo after his 50th birthday. He was also a 'great dancer'.

Alan Vines' career and the Fairey involvement in aviation are inseparable, as he was with them for so much of their history. Faireys had always supplied the Admiralty with aircraft, so a full appreciation of the problems in a marine environment combined with experience in the construction of light, strong structures was possessed in full measure. Just after the end of the first war, Faireys produced a very small flying boat known as the 'Hamble Baby', having a wing span of around 30'. From these literally very small beginnings, they went on to produce such flying boats as the Walrus and their last, the Atalanta, named after Sir Richard Fairey's attractive and unusually named wife. Our boats were, in turn, named after the flying boat. The Fairey 3F floatplane was carried on many British capital ships between the wars. It was launched by crane, perhaps a precursor of the 'Skyhook' system now proposed for Harrier launching off small ships. The non-stop mail service to South Africa using a 'piggy-back' system was also running at this time, with Fairey aircraft.

The most famous Fairey aircraft is probably the Swordfish, the 'Old Stringbag', in which so many gallant exploits were performed. Its lack of speed was actually an asset during the attack on the Bismarck, the approach being made along the 'valley' of the waves, as its top speed was less than the lowest speed offset setting on the German gunsights. The airframe was of bicycle tubing, jig built and 'Sifbronzed' together. Due to minor airframe twisting occasioned by the brazing, the wing latch pins frequently could not be engaged on initial assembly. A large wooden lever was then surreptitiously employed to correct this when the A.I.D. inspector wasn't looking.

The main assembly area at Hamble had some peculiarities as it was below high tide level. As a result, jets of water regularly sprang up through cracks in the floor. Also, the hydrostatic pressure caused the floor to heave. As this distorted airframes resting on the floor, airframe acceptances had to be subjected to the tide tables! It was also a frequent occurrence for completed aircraft, wings folded, to be towed by road to the airfield for their flight trials while the local constable had his lunch.

Other well known aircraft with which Alan was involved were the Firefly, which gave its name to a dinghy class, the Barracuda, the Hurricanes built under licence in wartime and the Gannet radar picket aircraft. This last had many elegant and practical engineering features and innovations. On this aircraft, of which over 300 were built, he introduced the radically new concept of 'Envelope Jigging'. This enabled relatively unskilled operators to assemble and rivet airframe components quickly and accurately. One feature was the co-axial contra-rotating propellors driven by Double Mamba engines, one of which could be shut down for economical cruising. The Rotodyne – a revolutionary torque reactionless helicopter – was also designed by Faireys to meet a B.E.A. specification firstly as a 60 seater than for 120. Unfortunately, the helicopter side vanished as a result of helicopter constructor 'rationalisation'.

Following on from the traditionally high standard of engineering, there was involvement through Fairey Engineering of Stockport with the nuclear reactor control gear for Trawsfynedd and in the machining of graphite reactor moderator blocks.

All of this seems a long way from boats. But the time came when Alan, a keen and competitive helmsman, decided that he wanted a boat that was fast and weatherly but also suitable for family sailing with his wife and three daughters. Fairey Marine had a range of hot moulded dinghies – Firefly, (the hull by Uffa Fox and the mast by Alan Vines), Albacore etc. – as well as fast offshore cruisers such as the Huntsman, Huntress and Spearfish. There had also been the Uffa Fox designed lightweight lifeboat, carried under the wings of Coastal Command aircraft for dropping to survivors in mid-ocean. In conjunction with Charles Currey of Fairey Marine, he hatched up a design using as a basis a transomless Albacore hull partially split to allow the insertion of a wedge shaped ply panel. The sides were extended to 22′ and a transom added. There were many other ingenious touches, including two dagger boards in series, the second being for trimming. It was a very successful design. This boat was the precursor of the Atalanta. The following account was written by him for the 1973/74 Bulletin and was accompanied by a reprint of an article on **Sujanwiz** from the December 1952 Yachting World.

In about 1950 we always spent our summer holidays in Seagrove Bay, Seaview, Isle of Wight. It has a flat sandy beach with boats moored off and drying out at low tide. The family went by car with dogs, etc., and I sailed a Firefly from Hamble. It was during these trips that I found how seaworthy a light dinghy could be in quite bad conditions.

As the children got bigger we had to have a larger boat than a Firefly, so I decided the ideal solution would be a big Firefly with ballasted keels to keep the

boat right side up, instead of aerobatics with minimum draft and altoghether very light. The result was the Fairey Marine built **Sujanwiz,** named after my three daughters. The general specification was: 22ft. overall, 9 inch draught with keels up, hull of moulded plywood 3/16ths inches thick, deck of 1/8th inch ply, ballast in the form of twin retractable loaded dagger plates, and sloop rig.

We sailed **Sujanwiz** for several summers and quite often visited Uffa Fox at Cowes, always under sail as we had no engine and only oars. Uffa had always taken a great interest in the boat and the children, as my wife came from Cowes and had known Uffa long before he took to boats. One day when we were at Cowes Uffa said: "Why don't Fairey Marine develop your boat?" After a time, to my delight, they agreed to do so and built a prototype.

Uffa Fox drew the lines keeping the bow full for safety when wave-riding down a swell into the wave in front. This has worked well and also makes it possible to use the forehatch for sail-changing in bad weather. Fairey Marine, helped by the test facilities of Fairey Aviation, did the engineering of the keels, etc., and the result in 1955 was the Atalanta prototype, named after the last flying-boat built by Fairey Aviation.

The boat was sailed hard for one season and the first production boats were completed in 1956. The layout followed the general lines of **Sujanwiz,** the main difference being swinging keels in place of loaded dagger plates, as these tended to jam solid when hitting the bottom as well as move about in a seaway. The swinging keels and clamps have worked well. In shallow water sail with one keel down and the other half up; when you hit go about, lift the keel and off you go.

I hope that these notes will be of interest to owners. Some don't like the rounded decks, but they do make a strong light hull and reduce the windage; which is important in a very shallow-draft hull.

Alan was responsible for the design of the rudder and keel mechanisms and much of the internal layout.

Prior to this, as a novel response to the Commandos' requirement for a folding canoe, capable of assembly and launching from a submarine, he had designed and built a folding foat of 3mm. birch ply and fabric. The prototype was largely built in his lounge. It could be assembled in sizes to take one to fifteen men, largely with 3/16" brass split pins and was an excellent surfing craft. A development of this was later sold as the 'Pixie'. Well over 500 were sold by Faireys. He later collaborated with Charles Currey in the design of the 'Dinghy', which was specifically designed with a flap in the transom to fit over the aft cabin hatch of the Atalanta. This was a descendent of the 'Duckling', a hot moulded dinghy whose lines were drawn by Uffa Fox, the rest being by Charles Currey.

The final words should be those of his wife Joan, as I surely could think of no more fitting epitaph.

"He had a great zest for life and loved his work at Faireys on the aeroplanes and boats. He was fun to live with and we all miss him very much."

My thanks are due to Mrs. Vines, Capt. Charles Currey and Peter Twiss for their help in providing material for this brief tribute to a unique man. My apologies for any errors or misunderstandings. If anyone has more information or corrections, please tell me!

Hon. Ed.

THE SOUTH COAST FORUM

David & Anthea Lovelock (A102)

When we were asked at the 1984 Dinner to organise a rally on the South Coast we had to say that, with our third under-three-year-old due, ATALANTA MARY laid up, and the unpredictability of my work, there was no chance of us being able to run such an event. Later in the year, however, we saw that we could take advantage of our large garden and the boat's dismantled state to run a weekend "Forum" which would be partly technical and partly social in nature. With the agreement of the Hon. Sec. we circulated just over 100 of the members geographically most likely to be able to attend and awaited results, hoping that neither too many nor too few would respond. Luckily the numbers turned out well with about 30 people representing 16 boats asking to attend. It was fortunate that we had decided to circulate members outside the South Coast area, as most of those replying came from elsewhere! I dare say that had we circulated Scottish and overseas members as well, some may have attended, and to such I apologise if our economy deprived you of this opportunity.

The first weekend in September was chosen as coming after most summer holidays would be over but before the days became cold and the evenings dark. It also provided an early afternoon high water time locally so that there would be the possibility of sailing if the opportunity arose. The only known casualties of this choice of dates were the family who wrote expressing their dismay that they felt unable to ask their son to postpone his wedding!

Although the best of the hot summer had passed, the weather remained dry and those who elected to bring caravans or tents were able to set up camp comfortably. Sixteen joined in the buffet supper on the Friday night, which was one less than had been expected as the Hon. Sec. had unfortunately broken down en route and did not arrive until the following morning. Saturday saw the arrival of the remainder of the participants. It was soon evident that as much "Business" would be done outside the formal sessions as in them, and it was not until 1030, an hour later than planned, that members were prised out of their private meetings and off ATALANTA MARY to start the first seminar on "Engines and Electronics". This was ably led by Ted Stearn (A183) and covered a range of problems and solutions. We were grateful for the presence of Alf Weaver from Messrs Coventry Victor (CV) who dispensed advice and leaflets and answered a great many questions, vigorously defending his firm's product. It was generally agreed that the cause of most CV unreliability was magneto overheating, and it was curious that he did not recommend substituting coil ignition as a solution. The magneto problem is thought to lie in oxidisation of the points (which, alas, are no longer tipped with platinum) and various palliative measures are under investigation. The importance of regularly overhauling the carburettor was also stressed along with the need to provide good fuel filtration. Failure to engage the gears properly was another difficulty raised by several owners and the correct procedure for adjusting gearboxes was demonstrated. Mr Weaver urged all CV owners to contact him direct in case of trouble as in addition to many years experience he has access to "As supplied" records which enable him to give authoritative advice on individual engines. Further discussion

ranged over the various other petrol and diesel engines fitted in the class, transmission systems (including variable pitch), exhaust systems (where cast iron seems to be the only trouble free material) and ventilation of the engine compartment which was reckoned to be barely adequate. Time only permitted a rapid run through electrical problems where deterioration of the original single strand cable was the commonest complaint. Various twin battery arrangements were discussed (blocking diode systems being out of favour) as were schemes for wiring masthead fittings, including aerials, Perhaps the only electrical problem left unresolved was that of radio interference suppression.

After a break for refreshment, George Parker (A87) led us into the world of Masts, Sails and Rigging. Once again there was a lively exchange of information ranging through materials for masts and rigging, reefing mechanisms (including headsail rollers which were highly praised), cut of sails and tuning the rig. Two topics which aroused particular interest were the effect of mast rake on performance (a subject needing more research, as no clear conclusions were reached), and the apparatus needed for lowering the mast short- or single-handed. Rigging wire terminations and the difficulties of rigging an effective kicking strap were other problems exercising members' minds.

After lunch, a do-it-yourself affair (although one or two had-it-done at the local pub), Dr. Burton (A12) gave a short presentation, illustrated with slides, on the subject of Keels and Rudders and guided the ensuing discussion. This is clearly an area about which most members feel concerned and although not everyone agreed on the best methods and materials for maintenance and repair, all came away with a much better understanding of the underlying principles. It was generally agreed that, when newly installed, the original keel system works well (although hydraulic lifting gear has much to commend it). But corrosion of components can be rapid and profound leading to major problems. Galvanised and stainless steel are not "Fit and forget" materials for underwater use; aluminium sprayed steel is better, but still liable to corrode quickly where abraded. For the keelbolts, grease nipples in the tubes are a "Must". A76 has experimental Delrin (plastic) backing plates fitted, but there seem to be few applications for non metallic materials in this area in view of the stresses involved. The importance of drawing apparently sound galvanised bolts both in the keel structure and throughout the boat for periodic inspection was mentioned. So far as the rudder is concerned, blade fatigue is a continuing problem while the design of the lifting gear, which despite its complexity fails to bring the blade clear of the water when raised, is suffered in the hope that some enterprising member will come up with a radical and practical solution (any offers?).

Here I should like to that Maurice Donovan (Hon. Technical Advisor) for his help during the day, but particularly on this subject. On completion of the discussion, a horrifying rogues gallery of corroded keel ironmongery was available for inspection.

After tea, Derek Chiswell (A115) conducted a most efficient and entertaining auction of boating bits and pieces. Many bargains were snapped up and one was led to suspect that Mike Rowe (T11) was about to open a chandlery business! (Will he print this?) – Yes, he'll print ANYTHING!

Almost all the participants stayed on for the evening barbecue which seemed to be much enjoyed: it is debatable whether the kebabs gave more pleasure in their construction or consumption. Afterwards there was a short picture show. We had hoped to have a wider selection of slides to display than were available; perhaps this activity would be better left for the Annual Dinner in future.

Only one boat (T12) was available for sailing on the Sunday (Thank you, Palmers) so the majority of those who stayed on had a gentle morning discussing the finer points of boat layout and construction or just chatting in the sunshine.

It has been impossible in a short article to cover all the points raised over the weekend – which, of course, justifies the idea of getting together to exchange experiences and ideas. We were pleased that most (we hope all) of those who came found their weekend enjoyable and worthwhile. The idea is certainly worth repeating but we would not want to kill enthusiasm by making it an annual event at the same venue. Would anyone in the East or North of Britain like to have a go next?

EAST COAST RALLY 1984

George Parker

The Blackwater Estuary, on the day of the Town Regatta at West Mersea, is a yachtsman's delight reminiscent of the Solent in Cowes Week. Many wooden boats are in commission on this part of the coast and strong loyalties are attached to traditional classes whose owners the anonymity of fibre glass hulls and metal masts. Here we find very suitable sailing waters for Atalantas and for holding our East Coast Rally.

At 9.50 on Saturday, August 18th, in hazy sunshine, an impressive fleet of seven Atalantas, including A1 took part in the annual race round the Bench Head, Colne Bar and Knoll buoys; a distance, as the crow flies, of 10½ nautical miles. This course was the same as in the previous year and the wind pattern too was similar starting with a light following breeze off the land. This soon died leaving boats for a time at the mercy of the tide before a variable breeze filled in from the sea. Conditions which, while not exhilarating, tested the skill and concentration of the helsmen.

First over the start line was A143, CLYMENE (Bill Hensby) but hesitation over setting a spinnaker allowed A136, AMSARA (D.I. May) to take the lead. A1, ATALANTA (Vic Hammond), having no spinnaker, goosewinged a second jib boomed out with a boat hook and began to overhaul CLYMENE until the latter got her spinnaker up, albeit a bit twisted at the masthead.

Soon the wind began to fade and boats tried to put up more sail. AMSARA filled the gap below her small spinnaker with a partially hoisted genoa while CLYMENE goosewinged her genoa. All to little avail however, as the wind died

completely. The ebb tide, helpful till now, gave way to slack water and skippers feared that they would be borne away from the Bench Head buoy when the tide turned. Keeping kedge anchors at the ready, and taking regular bearings on objects ashore to gauge their drift, they tried to edge out of the main channel.

The crew of AMSARA, ignoring the Governments' health warning, lit cigarettes to detect the slightest puff of air and spotted the first stirring of a sea breeze. They decided to go about and, with one keel down tacked into shallow water, dropping behind CLYMENE but to windward of her. A bold move which paid off because AMSARA soon regained the lead and was first at the Bench Head mark. Almost certainly it was at this point that the race was decided. AMSARA graudally increased her distance from CLYMENE and MAY, who had made the most of opportunity, was a clear winner.

While the leadership was being contested, other boats in the fleet were enjoying a bit of a ding dong. At the start a group of four had crossed the line abreast, and, of these A151, MISTURA (John Brady) with a cruising chute out distanced the others. However she had sought the shallows to the south a little too soon and the other boats, helped by the last of the ebb tide, got past her. It was not until the wind filled in after the calm that she regained the fleet. However A73, LYDE (R. McGivern) who, like MISTURA berths at the Up River Yacht Club and is a long standing rival, reached the Bench Head buoy before MISTURA and drew further ahead at the Colne Bar. She then misjudged the strength of the tide and took two extra tacks to reach the NW Knoll. MISTURA saw this mistake and stood on for some distance at the Colne Bar before making a single tack for the Knoll. This move put her in front of LYDE and both yachts vied with each other on the return leg to the Nass Beacon. MISTURA, with a cruising chute and genoa, kept her lead and was third across the line while LYDE, with a spinnaker, moved up a little and was fourth, only 80 seconds behind.

A1, ATALANTA, which had made such a good start, was overtaken during the calm patch and left for a time at the tail of the fleet. By concentrating every effort on the helm her skipper brought her through to the Bench Head mark ahead of KOOKABURRA and DEVORGUILLA and then forged ahead to finish in fifth place.

A168, KOOKABURRA (Norman Dorrington), last year's winner, was out of luck. She started last but finished sixth while A16, DEVORGUILLA (Martin Bennett) started well and finished seventh. Fortuna ludum insolentem ludet.

In the evening skippers, crews and friends were entertained to supper by Maj. Gen. Bill Odling and his wife Margaret in the splendid old barn at Gun House, Fingringhoe. It was an additional pleasure for us to meet the Commodore's two daughters and their husbands and three grandchildren and to have present the doyen of our Association Eric Payne (A166, HULLABALOO). Everyone's sincere thanks to our hosts for their hospitality were expressed by Bill Hensby. The Commodore's part in organising this highly successful Rally was gratefully acknowledged.

The writer would like to thank Bill Hensby for the opportunity to participate in the race aboard CLYMENE.

TO REBUILD IN FIBREGLASS OR NOT, THAT IS THE QUESTION!

Tim Palmer (T12)

We recently attended the South Coast Rally on dry land at Cattistock in Dorset. It was well organised and we enjoyed it very much. The thing that struck me, was the fact that a lot of the boats seem to be in constant refit. Indeed my own boat "TILYHO" has just had its first season in the water, after a 5 year refit, during which I did everything from stem to stern. Yet I still seem to have lots to do, and so it goes on. If it were not for such dedicated types as us the majority of the boats would have passed away by now.

How much longer then can they go on? Well speaking for myself, I do not want to spend further disproportionate amounts of time money and effort for so little sailing. To me it is plain enough, the combination of wind, weather, sea and age finishes off all boats in the end. What is needed is new ones. So why not rebuild in fibreglass?

My idea is that the Association should form a Ltd company i.e. "The Atalanta Owners Association Ltd." Our company would have the hull and deck mouldings constructed from an existing boat, used as a plug by a company specialising in this work and under contract to us. The other parts of the boat i.e., the ironmongery could be supplied by an engineering firm also under contract. The sails, rigging and engine etc in the same manner.

The selling of the boat could be in two forms. (1) Kit form or (2) fully finished to a standard specification, through our own company or appointed agents worldwide. We will have to set up a committee to look into design changes to improve the boat e.g., the rudder and keel lifting mechanism etc. A marine architect will need to be employed to engineer these changes and those of adapting the boat to fibreglass construction. These problems are not insurmountable, nor are we starting from scratch as we already have all the drawings plus a wealth of experience between us. When the committee has finished redesigning the problem areas, production costs can be obtained. At this time the company could be formed and shares issued, to raise the money to cover all the costs, including the building and development of a prototype and for sales and marketing.

I have spoken to a marine architect, aboard my own boat who said that there should be no problem converting the boat to fibreglass and the costs of production ought to be no more than any other 26 footer and may be less, because the Atalanta is lighter than most boats of this size.

The production rate using the one set of moulds would be one hull and one deck per two weeks with a further week for bonding together i.e. 15 boats a year approximately.

Alternatively the Association could go into partnership with a boat builder instead. The Association providing the capital investment in the moulds etc., and the builder constructing and selling the boats under his name. This way ought to be

an attractive business proposition as we would be supplying a very good package of a ready designed and successful boat, together with drawings and a substantial investment.

I hope I have kindled a spark for the future or at least sown the seed for debate. Then perhaps one day I will achieve my ambition to own a brand new redesigned, less maintenance, foam injected, unsinkable Atalanta.

RAMSEY ROT

A & W Jones (A65 – JOANN)

AUGUST 30TH.

Sailed from Ravenglass to Ramsey, I.O.M. arriving with the first decent breeze of the cruise so far. (F5–6) The rest of the day was spent repairing a broken exhaust pipe.

AUGUST 31ST.

The day my wife went missing – later to be located and retrieved from the ladies toilet/shower room in the Manx Sailing Club. The antics necessary to unlock the door, or how the door was locked and bolted so securely in the first place will get no further publicity in this story.

SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2ND, 3RD.

Listen to ridiculous Shipping Forecasts (7–8–9–10–11). Visit Ramsey C.G. twice daily and spectate at M.G.P. practice sessions. The motorcycle event being the excuse for calling in Ramsey.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 4TH.

Forecast as above. Became religious and trotted off to Church. The weather changed and added torrential rain to the gale force winds and we got drenched.

SEPTEMBER 5TH.

13.55 S.F. Irish Sea NW 5–7 backing W4–5. That must be an improvement! A visit to the C.G. and a call to Bracknell allayed any fears we may have had about what seemed to be still very strong winds up in the sky. We decided to sail in company with 'SOLEST', and Atlantic Clipper also bound for Glasson. 'SOLEST' cleared the harbour at 20.35 and we departed at 21.00 hrs under working jib with the main rolled down to the first batten and then lashed safely down on the boom. As the wind eased and backed, it would then be a simple matter to steadily increase sail area. SOLEST'S stern light was just visible for short periods crossing Ramsey Bay and then it suddenly changed to red, followed by green and then back to white.

Twenty minutes later 'JOANN' was put broadside on to wind and sea and laid well over, the wind strength overcoming the efforts of the Autohelm. This is what happened to 'SOLEST' and explains the white/red/green/white episode.

The wind continued to increase and conditons became uncomfortable but manageable, and at approximately 23.30 the mast head lights of what was obviously a large ship were sighted overtaking to leeward very slowly. As the ship's stern light started drawing forward of abeam, a wave broke on JOANN'S aft cabin, depressing the stern and rolling her over on the port side as the bow lifted. Possibly, she tripped over the wave with her keels. I was washed up to the cockpit forward bulkhead, my harness line being long enough to allow movement round the cockpit, turning me to face aft in the process. in the darkness it took a short time to decide which way was '*up*', but when I realised the light in the water was our masthead light and not a reflection, I got moving a bit sharpish. She seemed reluctant to come upright, the reason of course being the jib full of water not giving JOANN a chance. After the port jib sheet was released, the mast lifted and we shot off down wind again. But what about my crew? Win was down below, wearing a harness fastened to a port grab rail on a shortened rope, so came to no harm. If attached to the starboard side, she would have swung round like a pendulum.

The jib had to come off, but how? I was soon relieved of that problem when it blew out, but speed was still too high. The Stowe trailed log seemed to be 'on the blink', registering from 2 knots to right off the clock. No doubt a whiplash effect was taking place with the rotator in the following seas.

Speed had to be reduced, but I couldn't manage the traditional methods. I couldn't shorten sail. I didn't have any! (apart from a few tatters of cloth flaying about on the forestay). Deck work was impossible and streaming warps out of the question. Possibly I was standing on the answer. A few years ago, I fitted a 9 B.H.P. Hatz diesel road roller engine. (In modern Tupperware boats it carries the BMW name with a price tag to match, when marinised by BMW). This drives through a home made 2 to 1 reduction box coupled to the existing hydraulic controlled variable pitch prop. With the engine running at 1200–1400 RPM. (600–700 prop. revs) in *neutral* pitch I found the boat steadier and I could maintain better control over the wave systems and the log stopped giving nonsensical information. At times, astern pitch up to a maximum of 5° was used when conditions became extreme.

Win struggled from the forward cabin every hour to switch on the fuel transfer pump to keep the header tank topped up. A very difficult task under the conditions. The only time I have been seasick was plodding around the Pentland Firth during wartime, (at least the Navy paid me that time) and having to 'bleed' the system would have upset that record. I was also passed food and drink on Win's visits to the 'alter' steps and offered advise on how to sail, at regular intervals.

We decided to shelter in Piel Harbour instead of running the last few miles across Morecombe Bay. Our arrival near the top of a 10 metre tide at Walney Light took away any shelter we could have expected from Walney Island, and the last mile up the channel took nearly an hour against what was now a head wind.

Mooring became the next problem, soon resolved when the motor stopped, JOANN stopped, and a mooring buoy we had given a wide berth vanished under water. A trailing line from the buoy was mooring us by the stern. The CQR was dropped over the bow in the hope that, if and when the line round the prop parted, we wouldn't be blown out into that lot again. The last entry in the log by Win summed up the situation very well. "Arrived Piel 10.27 after BLOODY rough passage (13½ hrs.)"

The trip across the bay to Glasson on Wednesday September 7th was in calm conditions F 3 easterly and not west as predicted for Monday evening/Tuesday morning.

REFLECTIONS

1. Listen to all the experts but finally use your own judgement. This is the first time I have been guided into doing something against what I thought was right.
2. Wind strength? Always difficult to estimate and yet so easy to exaggerate. I suggested F8 would be about the average, but 'SOLEST' was told over the R.T. by Ramsey C.G. that it was 8 rising to 9 during the night.
Wave Heights? I will not attempt even a wild guess because the Irish Sea always gets in a bit of a mess when the wind blows, but it is the worst I have encounted since the nineteen forties. 'SOLENT' also suffered a knockdown similar to 'JOANN' but with a centre cockpit full of water for a long time. The forward bulkhead also moved and made the toilet compartment semi open plan.
3. Did the large ship overtaking, (an estimated half mile to leeward,) further disturb an already confused sea?
4. Headsail roller reefing gear will be fitted for next season.
5. Damage – Joint between aft coach roof and aft deck cracked. Port spreader bent. R.T. aerial bracket, 2" x ¼" S.S. bolt distorted and aerial cable clips ripped out of top seven foot of mast. A large number of mast track screws were missing, obviously through vibration and mast flexure. Good stowage down below by Win prevented chaos, although the Seaspot R.D.F. went missing for a time. It was finally located under the sea toilet pipe work. Water down below amounted to no more than seven or eight gallons.
6. I did toy with the idea of jacking one keel up a little more to give the effect of a longer fin but couldn't muster up the courage to try it. JOANN's keels are hydraulic, with enough power to overcome the locked keel clamps. With the control in the cockpit, raising would be easy but lowering again impossible. Running the engine relieved me of that worry. Tank testing a scale model with a moveable twin keel configuration would be instructive and less worrying.
7. When violently thrown around in the dark without a straight and level horizon for a reference point, the senses take time to decide the direction of gravitational pull. Well, mine did! Win down below had a similar experience, possibly made worse by being in the unlit cabin.
8. Noise and mast vibration far worse than previously experienced.
9. A large cam cleat controlled the jib sheet from the winch. This allowed a quick release under difficult conditions.

CREW'S OBSERVATIONS

Though Albert only admitted to apprehension on this journey, with me there was, at times, fear, (especially when we were rolled down and I was on my back, struggling to regain a sitting position, a certain amount of panic came over me and I shouted above the screeching wind "For God's sake, will you tell me what's happening"). Later I became a bit passive and remember thinking that nothing was to be gained by worrying, so tried to relax and think that even the worst things pass.

I will never know how, for 13½ hrs. Albert coped with all this and I can only be grateful for his endurance that brought us safely through that dreadful night.

Just once did I hear him get a bit mad – that was when the wind blew half his Kit Kat away and a few choice words floated down into the cabin.

What relief when we moored off Piel Island at 10.27 and crawled into our sleeping bags (still fully dressed). We were both out like lights until 18.20. What bliss to be once again on dry land.

(Submitted for 1983/84 and held over)

METHOD OF CONSTRUCTING KEEL BOLT WASHERS

Rev. E.Y. Robinson (F37)

First you must make a jig to cut the washers, thus:

Materials required

2 pieces 3/8" plywood 6" x 3½"
1 piece hardwood 6" x 1" x 1"
1 piece hardwood 2½" x 1" x 1"
10 ¾" screws
A quantity of panel pins

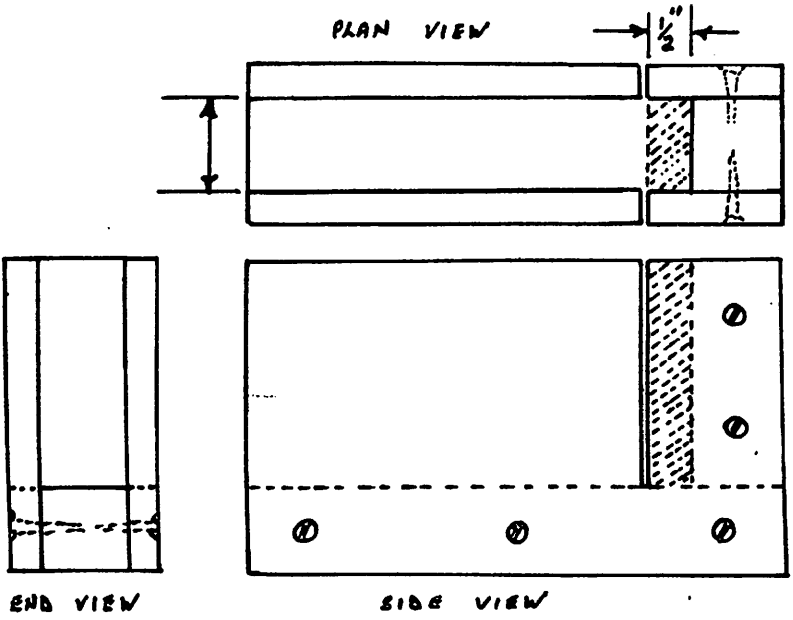
Method of construction

See diagram. All corners must be exactly square and all sides parallel otherwise the cutting slot will not be parallel to the 'stop' and the ring washers will be distorted. This applies especially to the 'stop' being square to the base and to the plywood 'cheeks' crosswise. Mock up with the panel pins and check all corners before boring and countersinking for the screws. Use a panel saw to cut the 'slot' which must be ½" from face of 'stop' and parallel to same.

Cutting the ring washers

Procure a radiator rubber connecting pipe from a repair garage of the correct outside diameter and thickness. The bent parts are useless, so the longer and straight parts the better. This rubber is excellent for our purpose as it resists heat and pressure. I was lucky to procure a 'cut-off' for £1.00 which made 9 washers. Uncut pipes cost from £4.00–£5.00 according to size.

Use a knife which fits snugly to the slot. Keep the knife *very* sharp by using a whetstone every two cuts. Also wipe on oil to the knife blade. This is important, otherwise distortion occurs.



CUTTING JIG FOR KEEL CLAMP BOLT SEALING WASHERS.

WASHER WILL BE IN HATCHED AREA. COMPRESS TUBE SUFFICIENTLY TO OBTAIN CORRECT WASHER LENGTH.

One last item. Make a hardwood stick 9" x 1" x 3/8". I used a piece of flat curtain rail. This implement is used to insert into the uncut tube after it is roughly positioned in the receiving area. By pressing down, it makes complete contact all along the base, and by pushing the tube forward makes the end flush with the 'stop'. The cut is then made. The first cut may have to be discarded if the face of the tube is not square with its sides. Sand the edges of the stick to make an easy fit to the inside faces of the cheeks. This stick will then be upended when the last two or three rings have to be cut – fingers are protected from the knife as the tube is pushed forward against the 'stop'. N.B. Keep a gentle pressure on the rubber tube against the 'stop' – too great a pressure distorts the washers.

You will find cutting easier and more accurate if you hold the jig in a vice. I strongly advise against the use of rubber tubing which incorporates too much nylon or cotton. I have used these washers for a season now, and am very pleased with the result.

"MALIN, VARIABLE THREE OR LESS"

F. Martin (Seamajor A92)

These were the words with which we were to become all too familiar on our cruise in SEAMAJOR this summer. Light winds dogged our progress for the entire holiday-month of August. Some days we sailed for twelve hours and only covered twentyfive miles. We became adept at spinnaker jibbing and also discovered that, well sheeted in, the spinnaker can be used instead of the genoa, as long as the wind is just aft of the beam.

This cruise was our first with only the skipper and mate on board. Our family have now grown up and were busy elsewhere, except for our eldest son, who joined us for only the first weekend. We timed the start of the cruise from Bangor to arrive in Liverpool to see the Tall Ships, and it was here that Kenneth left us to return to work.

As we cruised along the English coast next day, Blackpool tower was our landmark; it is a very useful navigational aid as it can be seen for miles. Our destination was Fleetwood, a very clean and tidy town which we both liked. The entrance is disconcerting and I found it hard to believe the buoys and pilot book, as it appeared that we were running straight up the beach and into the town. However the deep channel swung suddenly to port, running parallel with the shore, it's starboard side marked only by the sand. During the night we had an unnerving incident. As we were taking the ground at 01.30, a really vicious squall hit us. The wind was howling through the rigging and it was amazing the size of the waves which it managed to produce over such a small fetch of water, for we were protected to windward by sand banks between the channel and the Irish Sea. Poor SEAMAJOR thumped and shuddered each time she hit the sand and I wondered if she could possibly emerge unscathed, but she did. Fortunately, the squall passed as quickly as it had come, and in about twenty minutes we were able to return to sleep, in peace and quietness.

The following day we paid a visit to Heysham, hoping to visit Glasson Dock on our return but, having seen a port can (and a sailing boat) high and dry on the sand where the channel should have been, we decided to return to Fleetwood. There was also, for once, a strong onshore wind, so we did not want to wait for the tide to rise enough for us to attempt to enter Glasson Dock.

Piel Island was our next anchorage, a delightful place near Barrow-in-Furness. We had a ruined castle beside us and even a handicap race from the Roa Island club to watch. The following morning we drifted on the tide to Barrow, and back, then unfolded our Bickerton bicycles and visited Furness Abbey. This must have been a most impressive building before it was defaced by Henry VIII; even as a ruin it has great impact.

On to Workington to meet a friend, who sailed in company with us across the Solway to Little Ross Island, another quiet anchorage. Another windless day gave us a chance to take the tide to and from Kirkudbright to see the town with its castle and tolbooth.

Calls were made at Garlieston, Whithorn, Port William and Dunmore, all working fishing ports. Port William is a tiny little harbour and, as we sailed in, we wondered

where we could anchor, as we didn't fancy being against the harbour wall. We picked up a buoy, but it wasn't strong enough for a boat of our size, but it held us against the wind for long enough for Peter to row out the kedge anchor. Then it was a case of pulling up on this and dropping the Danforth, which is too heavy to row out, whilst Peter maintained a tight rope between SEAMAJOR and the dinghy, in case we started to drift back as the anchor tripped. All went according to plan, we dropped back on the Danforth and reset the kedge astern, to stop us swinging into the other boats around us. We spent an awkward night as the ground sloped and as we dried out we tipped to port, a thing which hasn't happened to us before. We spent the evening, while we were grounded, inspecting the hull and changing the rudder blade. We have been carrying a spare blade for a few years now and the new one has eliminated a lot of the play in the steering: it has even enabled us to leave SEAMAJOR to steer herself for a few minutes, another novelty for us!

Our final anchorage before rounding the Mull of Galloway was another pretty but lonely spot called East Tarbet. We left here at 0300 hours to catch the tide but as usual there was no wind, so Peter started rowing. This nearly always has the effect of producing a wind, even if it lasts only long enough for him to return to SEAMAJOR and replace the dinghy astern! However on this occasion no wind materialised and we suddenly realised that the light from the lighthouse was no longer visible; the tide, instead of taking us round the Mull, was taking us in towards the rocks! Peter started the Seagull outboard motor, as quickly as possible and we were relieved to hear the noise of breaking seas diminishing. We probably were not as close as we thought, but at 0339, peering into semi-darkness, sounds are exaggerated, and pounding waves make a menacing noise, and I was in no mood to find out just how close we were!

We arrived at Port Patrick to find another member of the staff from school standing on the quay! Neither he nor we had any idea that the other was going there, and as we left two hours later, the co-incidence of our meeting is staggering. The wind was southerly force four to five so we decided to make our crossing to Ireland. We had an excellent sail until we were about two thirds of the way across, when the mist closed in. It was an eerie feeling, seeing a bank of fog about a mile away and hearing the Mew Island foghorn and being almost motionless ourselves. An hour later the mist rolled away and we were in sunshine again but Mew Island continued to remain hidden and to use its horn until we were out of earshot. On coming out of the mist, it was reassuring to see two large super-tankers anchored close together, to confirm our position just to the north of Belfast Lough. We anchored in Brown's Bay just outside Lough Larne for the night.

The next morning we went into Larne with the tide and out again with the next to take us to Red Bay. On the way we passed some impressive chalk cliffs with a volcanic plug of granite, our first taste of the prolific and varied geological features of Ireland. Continuing along the coast, we had an excellent sail past Fair Head and Sheep Island and the basalt cliffs which form the Giants Causeway. These are a most impressive sight from the sea, with their vertical fluted columns crossed by horizontal bands of red sandstone. Then came Dunluce Castle, built so close to the edge of the cliff that it is said that the kitchens (with all the servants in them!) fell into the sea during a storm. Looking at the castle now, one can believe the story!

Another unusual building, the Mussenden Temple, (a copy of the Temple of Vesta in Rome,) adorns the clifftop further west, with the ruined Downhill Castle set at a safer distance inland. Finally, in Eire now, Greencastle, so called not because it is ivy-covered but because it is built of green rock.

Our final destination westwards was Culdaff, which involved rounding Inishowen Head. We found this difficult in both directions: going westwards we were running and kept out to sea, going eastwards we were tacking and tried a more inshore passage, in each case having the tide with us. Neither was successful as the sea was lumpy and confused. so much so that on our return journey it was sometimes necessary for Peter to row the head of the boat round to enable us change from one tack to the other. We just seemed to bounce up and down in the same place. When we tried to use the Seagull, it was unable to cope, as it was out of the water for as long as it was in it. It took us nine hours to cover thirteen miles. We never found anyone who could tell us why the sea was like this nor how to avoid the consequences. To add to our frustration, the Inishowen foghorn was blaring away, two blasts every thirty seconds, from midday onwards. (In fact we became heartily sick of it, for it didn't stop until we were out of earshot, another day and a half later – a total of two days and two nights!)

We felt it was time to retrace our steps, but the wind thought otherwise so with virtually no wind we drifted up Lough Foyle on the tide for five and a half hours before abandoning our attempt to reach Derry. Although designated a big ship channel it is almost impossible to distinguish between port and starboard marks especially against the sun. We managed to go aground twice but didn't feel quite so bad when someone on hearing where we had been, enquired "Did you go aground? Everyone does on their first visit." We managed to sail back to the mouth of the lough, to Magilligan's Point without going aground, but it had taken us nine and a half hours to cover eighteen miles. This was to be our second night at Magilligan's Point, a strange place only a few yards from the beach, yet in twenty feet of water. Once the swimmers had gone home there were only two things to disturb us, the foghorn and the constant rattle of small arms fire to remind us that, behind the dunes was a Northern Irish firing range. The firing was still going on when I went to sleep and I awoke to it in the morning.

Despite poor visibility and winds, we decided to push on eastwards and after six and a half hours we reached Portstewart, ten miles away. We started with Peter rowing alternating with a fitful breeze, then we had a thunderstorm, which brought with it a minor squall (force 5) and torrential rain but it only lasted about fifteen minutes and we were back to drifting again. We actually entered the harbour with Peter rowing. Portstewart is without doubt the friendliest place we visited. It is a tiny fishing port and we were the only yacht there. The town comes right down to the harbour and many people take their evening constitutional along the quay. At least five groups of people stopped to talk to us, some about the Atalanta, but some non-sailors wanted to know where we had come from, how long it had taken, and so on.

With no wind and poor visibility we decided to spend the following morning cycling to Coleraine, after which we tacked to Portrush.

Our plan was to go to Rathlin Island next, so at 0400 we ghosted out of Portrush but once again the wind took charge and by 0815 we found that close hauled on the starboard tack, we could lay a course for Port Ellen on Islay. We took advantage of the south-easterly force four to five and for two hours we romped along, through the tide-rip off Benbane Head, out past Rathlin Island, but our luck didn't hold and the wind died. We crept along until with the tide turning against us we resorted to Seagull power for an hour, after which we returned to ghosting and finally sailed into Port Ellen. Despite two hours of good sailing and one hour of motoring, the thirty three mile crossing had taken eleven and a half hours.

Once back in Scotland, the weather pattern changed – the good winds became force six to eight (too strong for us to use!) and the calms remained! We drifted to Jura and then on to Port Crinan. We found a mooring here and went to see the canal which was closed owing to lack of water. The long-awaited gale arrived just before dawn and we were glad to be in a sheltered spot. It was mid afternoon before the wind and rain abated enough for us to nip round the corner into the partially-constructed Croabh Marina. This involved passing through Dorus Mor the channel three and a half cables wide between Craignish Point and Garraesar Island. The races never fail to send the adrenalin pumping round my body as we enter the turbulent water, only to get caught by the currents and swept onwards. In vain I move the tiller to try to counteract the boat's desire to travel broadside on or to hurtle towards some jagged rock. The oily looking patches of smooth water are no better, for here the current is just as strong. Sometimes as I peer down in horrified fascination, I see the beginning of a whirlpool and I'm thankful that we are passing through near slack water: I dread to think what conditions must be like with a strong wind and a strong tide against each other.

Croabh Marina has been created by joining together three islands and the Craignish shore, opposite Shuna Island. It was only started this year but when it is completed it will be a complete holiday complex. As it is at the moment it makes an excellent refuge from gales and has hot showers; it also has water and fuel facilities but no food shop. (The nearest one is seven miles away!)

With another gale forecast, Peter decided to go home by train from Oban to collect the car and trailer. He cycled the twenty two miles to Oban to catch the 0800 train while I remained to look after SEAMAJOR. With the rain lashing down and a good force eight blowing, I settled down with a book, surfacing at intervals to check the mooring lines and to add extra ones. The gale was abating when Peter returned a day and a half later, so leaving the car and trailer at Croabh, we sailed across to Loch Don on Mull. This meant going through the Pladda Narrows. Although this is wider than Dorus Mor, it is just as awe-inspiring, as it is the main channel between the Inner Hebrides and the mainland and so funnels a vast quantity of water through a narrow gap. I suffered from the same feeling of helplessness but was glad that, as in Dorus Mor, we had the wind to help us. We saw another "sailing boat" (under motor with sails furled) going against wind and tide making little headway, but the mist closed down before we could see how long it took him to emerge at the southerly end of the race.

We anchored in Loch Don, hoping to visit Duart Castle the following morning, but once again the weather frustrated us, and with a light northerly against us and

drizzle interspersed with rain, we knew that we would never reach the castle in the time available. So we made our way across the Firth of Lorne and decided to return to Loch Melfort by way of Cuan Sound. This is a narrow passage between the islands of Luing and Seil, and has a dog-leg in the middle of it. True to form, the wind died completely just after we had entered the sound. Peter struggled to get the Seagull to start, (it only needed to be dry but how do you achieve this when it is pouring with rain?) Much to our relief it started just before the dog-leg, for even with it working flat out, we were extremely close to the rock which we could see. (There is another submerged rock on the other side but it is not always easy to predict which way the current will carry you.) I had no time to become too worried, as we emerged from the race like the proverbial cork from a bottle! We spent the rest of the day sailing in Loch Melfort, with winds which altered through one hundred and eighty degrees and then went back again. After a night at anchor, we started for the marina with a reasonable tail wind, but, fickle to the end, it soon headed us. However, we managed to sail to a berth in the marina and then across to the slipway, where, for the first time on the holiday, we were delighted when it died. It enabled us to position Seamajor correctly on the trailer at the first attempt, and to lower the mast with no problems: we had wondered if we would be able to manage unaided, and it was good to find that we could!

This holiday was marvellous for wildlife; one of the advantages of ghosting is that one sees and hears so much more. In the Sound of Jura we saw three types of jelly-fish; large numbers of Aurelia, often so many of them and so close together that it would have been impossible to put your hand in the water anywhere round the boat without touching one. There were Chrysaora and Cyanla, also. Seals were abundant sometimes coming up so close to us that they had a fright and submerged with a splash, others would betray their presence only by their breathing. They would follow and watch us for about ten minutes, but always just out of camera range! We saw porpoises, nearly always in pairs, as were the Fulmars, which were so full of curiosity that we thought that they would hit the forestay, as they swooped round the boat. An Arctic Skua and a young gull which were so intent on their fight that they had to alter course to avoid hitting the sails, is another vivid memory. (The gull escaped, I'm glad to say.)

On the Irish coast we had seals and porpoises, black and red-throated divers, a plentiful supply of gannets, shearwaters, petrels and eider ducks. This was the coast for Chrysaora but the west coast of England and the Solway was the home of the really monstrous Rhizostoma jellyfish.

One of the big disappointments of the holiday was the lack of other boats. We saw, all-told, probably a dozen boats, but these should be re-named "motor boats with masts" as their sails were either furled or in their bags, even when going down-wind, let along when tacking. We did meet two other boats actually sailing, but we had expected far more. Indeed this might well have been entitled "The lonely cruise".

Our other disappointment was the lack of wind; we covered 566 miles, (4% under motor), in 210 hours, an average of just over 2½ knots. On only 5 days out of 28 does our log not include a nought in the wind strength for the day.

LA LIAISON MANCHE-OCEAN – A BRETON CANAL

J. S. Stearn (A183)

We are not sold on canals and we hate motoring, but it just so happened we had a yen to circumnavigate Brittany and to do that you have to travel some of the way by river and canal. What thus began as a necessity became an enchantment, a truly delectable experience. It is not for everyone because the canal is very shallow in places, but ideal for an Atalanta. Twenty years ago the canal fell into disuse through neglect and silting up. Then followed a vigorous restoration resulting in a minimum depth of 1.3m. and promises of an eventual 1.6m. Today, they are still predicting a bright future but the minimum depth is now only 1.2m. The reason is not hard to see; it is very little used and totally free. Even permits have now been abolished. All you need is a registered yacht, as in all of France, and a reliable engine.

The approach from England is via St. Malo so you can linger in the Channel Islands on the way, but do not let these temptresses deter you from your goal (even with gin at £3.75 a litre!). St. Malo is somewhat of a siren too; the lovely old town towering above its rock seen in the evening sun as you home in down the Grand Chenal is a sight you will long remember. A stop here is probably indicated as it is 26km. to Dinan and you will need to clear customs and get your tides right to navigate the R.Rance with its Barrage at the north end and Le Chatelier lock at the other. The 18.8km. between these two are an enormous mill pond. With a tide of up to 36ft. an unimaginable quantity of water collects here twice a day which is let out through the Barrage, thereby generating a useful amount of electricity. During the period of operation the level in the 'pond' falls rapidly. Some of the literature makes the place sound alarming – it is not, and advice in timing your passage is available at St. Malo, at either of the locks, or in the 'guide'. A word about this 'guide'. It is the pilot book for the passage and, by hook or by crook, you should obtain a copy. We came through from south to north and at the southern end it was on sale at the chandlers at La Roche Bernard and for £1.00 less at the Tourist Information Office in Redon. I would therefore expect it to be on sale in similar places in St. Malo, but in case of difficulty try the French National Tourist Office in Picadilly. It is called "Guide Vagnon de Navigation Fluviale No. 10 – Les Canaux Breton". Address in France: BP 27, 69641 Caluire Cedex. It is in English, French, and German.

Back to the passage. If you should arrive at St. Malo outside the very limited lock opening hours, the adjacent marina at St. Servan is available for much longer and the depth gauge over the sill is clearly visible. The food here is just as good and appreciably cheaper than in the more popular St. Malo, and there are plenty of shops for stocking up. We had one of the best meals of the holiday in St. Servan, one of the gastronomic marvels the region has to offer. I had a four course meal – duck pate and salad, stuffed clams (not to be missed), meat and veg., and creme caramel, for £3.75!

From here you have a pleasant day's sail to Dinan, through the two large locks where you will be packed like a sardine and perhaps begin to wonder if you can stand the pace. Two people on board could cope but your boat would be safer with three, and four would be better still – one to steer, two to manage warps and fenders, and one to help the lock-keeper. Do not worry, peace is on the way. Dinan is not typical of the time to come either. It is a beautiful old town but expensive and touristy. Here you must take the mast down and there is a small free crane to help you if you wish. A visit to the excellent 'facilities' would not come amiss either, they are the last you will see.

You can traverse the canal from Dinan to Redon (where you may put the mast up again), in four days, but that is rather non-stop and means travelling during all the hours the locks are operating. i.e. 0800 – 1930 hrs. and closed for lunch. Far better, if you can, to wind down, change gear, and savour the delights of something totally different.

You are now on the Canal d'Ille et Rance which is the canalised section of the R.Rance plus the 'pure' canal that connects it to the R. Vilaine on the other side. There is no commercial traffic, very few hire cruisers, and even fewer yachts. In five days we met only 21 boats with masts down, including those moored. Keep to the right however because you cannot usually see far ahead and there might be something round the next corner. This is one of the great fascinations. There are no long straight stretches but a continually changing scene. To begin with the banks are wooded and the overhanging trees provide the perfect hiding place for water voles, and kingfishers in profusion. Once we thought we saw an otter. If we had counted kingfishers instead of oncoming boats the tally would have been twice the number. You may be lucky and see one perched on a twig a few inches above the water, watching intently. Then he will dive in with such speed that he usually secures the unsuspecting little fish, and comes up with it wriggling in his beak. Off he goes, flying low along the side of the river, his brilliant blue plumage flashing in the sunlight, to disappear into the bank further up. Every two or three miles on this stretch you will come to a village so supplies are no problem. You are out of grockle country now, so brush the dust off your French and venture into the little shops and cafes. However unpromising on the outside, we always found the restaurants spotlessly clean, the service friendly, the prices a pleasant surprise, and the food beautifully presented. For eating on board you are spoilt for choice among the dozens of pates and cheeses to accompany your fresh baguette, tasty local butter, wine they almost give away, and peaches, nectarines, or Reine Claude (an especially delicious greengage), to finish with. Then you either walk it off or sleep it off according to your wont, and then it is on to pastures new.

At the head of the R. Rance are the Hédé locks, a staircase of eleven in a row. You might be delayed here in high summer because of water shortage, and have to wait until several boats are ready to make the ascent, but it is no hardship. We got delayed halfway, for the night. We tied to a couple of trees and had a good walk. The woods and lanes are beautiful, there is very little traffic, and often a village or a chateau to be seen not far away.

Now you have reached the summit and it just gets better and better. There are rock gorges and immense old stone mills, lots of different birds from the little dipper to the majestic heron, and above all the locks. Every éclusier gets a standard stone house, a bit of land and a small salary. Often he augments this with another job and, as the lock has to be tended every day of the year, you may be served by madame or grandpère or les enfants, whoever is available. Each lock is seemingly a little family village. As well as all the generations, there are the ducks and geese, the poultry, goats, the pony, and a guard dog Alsation. There is a kitchen garden to feed the family and a maize plot for the stock tethered on the bank. Every lock vies with the next to be the most beautiful. The profusion of flowers is fantastic; some spilling out of window boxes, dozens carefully bedded out in intricate patterns, and some growing out of such unlikely containers as old cream separators or motor tyres. Maybe there is a competition and a prize. I do not know but whatever the reason the results are wonderful. This is all the more surprising as French gardens on the whole are less colourful than ours. Their whole way of life in inland Brittany is like a glimpse into the past. There was a much heralded national one-day strike whilst we were there. We were given a leaflet to explain it. They wanted, naturally, more money for themselves and more investment in the canal system. We felt they were unlikely to get it on this particular canal which was an under-used, total dead loss so far as the state was concerned. Perhaps they agreed because no locks were closed. At the only one where the éclusier was obeying the strike call, he was most helpful in allowing us to work it ourselves. It was refreshing.

We did not stop in Rennes, the capital of Brittany, but I believe it has much to offer if you have a day to spare. We did stop at Redon, the only other town, and were glad we had done. It was a Monday and the street market was in full swing. There is a basin in the middle of the town where you may tie up, and plenty to see and do. You can put your mast up again here, if you can do this unaided. The river beyond Redon is wide and sailable, winding down to the sea 42km away. This is flat estuarine country where you are unlikely to see much except the herons flapping over the marshy fields and the grazing cattle. If you are not going out to sea you can turn right or left at Redon along the Canal de Nantes et Brest. Turn right and you will encounter some spectacular reaches. It becomes very shallow indeed. 0.8m., but pull your rudder up a bit and you will make it. Turn left and you can go through to the Loire valley and see the chateaux. The possibilities are endless, the Atalanta is the ideal vessel, and the Atalanta owner has this treat in store which is not offered to everyone. Bon Voyage.

BOLT IS A FOUR LETTER WORD

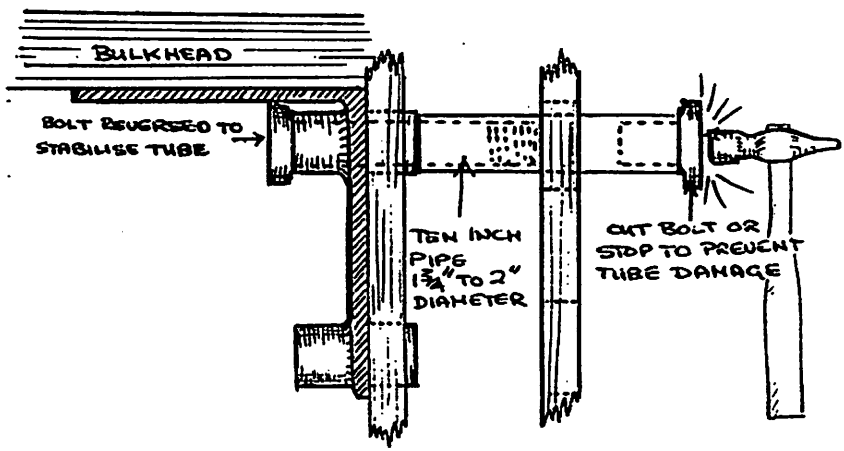
C. Twyford, 'HIRAN' (A95)

Much has been written and many detailed instructions given regarding the removal of the famous Atalanta Keels. Now that our boats are reaching their Silver Anniversary, I am sure that more owners, some of them like myself recently joining the fleet, will find when keel removal is contemplated, whether by desire or necessity, there is resistance from six very obstinate Residents. I refer, not to those well bred crew members, who slide gracefully from their well greased housings to nestle affectionately in the hands of their loving Skippers, but to those surly corroded beasts who cling tenaciously to their rusted pitted Lairs, displaying only a clean gleaming thread to lull us into the mistaken belief that they are performing their duties properly. I am sure that there are many among us who religiously tighten and slacken the nuts according to instructions but receive little if any benefit for their efforts. Having, in acquiring 'HIRAN', joined the latter ranks, the removal of these bolts had to be achieved. I followed religiously, in actions but certainly not verbally, the instructions given in 'Donovan on Keels', a must for those contemplating this action. But there was not a millimetre of movement. Then, fortunately for me, the AGM and Dinner intervened. The Hon Sec sat me next to the redoubtable Mr Donovan, from whom I learned many secrets regarding the construction of Atalantas, the treatment of metals and much encouragement in my efforts. Before we sat down I met briefly Paul Harris (A71) and Fred Boothman (A60), who had both struggled with bolts (further contact has taken place during 1984). Fred's required many evenings of constant beatings with a sledge hammer, but Paul's seemed to be closer related to mine and more serious measures had to be adopted. I list the various methods hoping these may be of assistance. First, a hole about 1/8" was drilled into the tubes in the position that will later have a grease nipple inserted. Then releasing fluid was introduced to soak for as long as possible, topping up if required. Contrary to the instructions in Donovan on Keels, the tops of the keel boxes in the forward cabin were removed and releasing fluid was sprayed and sprinkled as near to the bolts and inner clamping plate as possible, (only the top bolt is visible). I removed the clamping nuts from the bolts, as the following actions will certainly damage them. I must mention that, if you have reached this desperate stage, you will have to probably replace the bolts and clamping plates, also the backing plate if you have one. As the sledge hammer (14lbs) had not produced results, I hired a Kango hammer. (Number 501, which fits between the bolts and can be switched to hammer only, but measure this distance before hiring or borrowing). I found that it was best to use only the drill holder, as it did not slip off the bolt head. The hammer can be placed in the required position and rested on a platform.

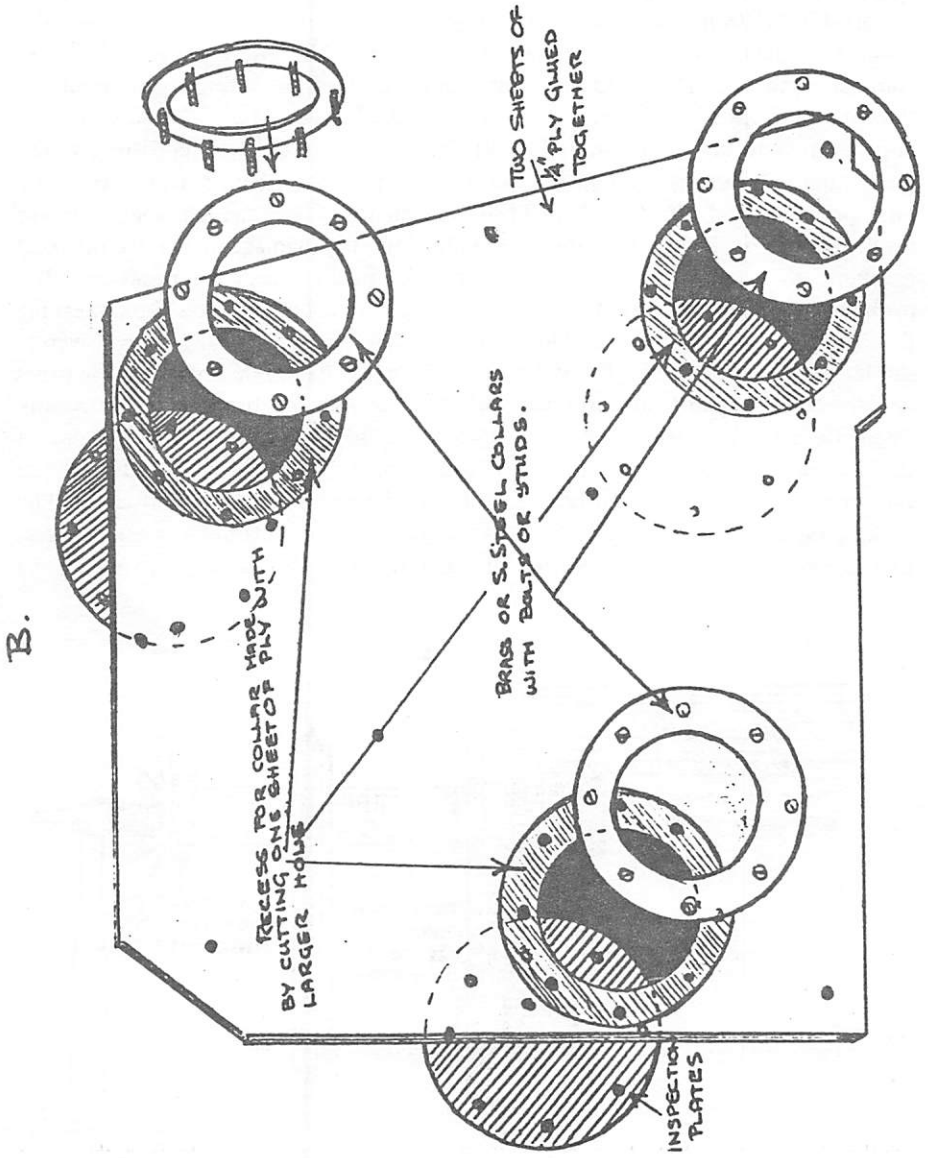
I used a small car tyre and various pieces of wood to wedge it at the correct height, constant application of releasing fluid and a small torch to look down the holes drilled in the tubes, so you can see the first movement (hopefully). According to your success or not, further holes can be drilled along the tubes. Keep them in a

straight line and include one or two at the junction of the tube and plate, at an angle to get releasing fluid into the tube where it goes through the keel box. More fluid, more Kango – no success! Then, with a small cold chisel I split the tube between the drilled holes and levered the tube open! My advice is not to split the tubes holding the main Pivot Bolt, as in Paul Harris's and my experience, if they resist the hammer and sledge is quicker and less costly to cut these lower Bolts. They are accessible from below. Obtain a machine saw blade (the tungsten tipped are cheaper and less liable to shatter) and fashion a handle long enough to easily allow you to use two hands. With the keel propped up securely *(remember that it weighs 450lbs! Hon. Ed.)* and a long screwdriver or wedge hammered between the inside keel clamp and the keel as far forward as possible, insert the saw blade and commence to cut. Depending on your comfort, strength, stamina and whatever time the pub opens or closes, the job should take between 1½ to 3 hours for each bolt. I refuse to divulge the time I took! The lowering of the keel has been covered many times. I fortunately had the use of a hoist, as described in D. on Keels, by kind permission of Mr Partridge (A184), which for single handed operation was invaluable. It is highly probable, depending on the damage made to the keel brackets, that removal and renovation of the brackets may be necessary. The problem here is the corrosion on the tubes which go through the keel box, meaning that they are larger on the inside of the Box. By inserting a 3/8" screwdriver or similar instrument through the Bolt access ports and hammered between the tubes and the wood (a long and arduous job) you can remove some of this corrosion. Then use a ten inch length of pipe between 1¾" to 2" diameter, inserting one of the old bolts (cleaned of course), through the tube in the reverse fashion to stabilise the pipe, with one of the cut bolts as a stop in the end of the tube that you will be striking (as illustrated – A). Then, after removing all the bolts holding the Brackets to the Keel Box and Bulkhead, use liberal amounts of White Spirit to soften the

A



white lead that seals the plate to the Keel Box. Hit the pipe sharply and constantly on the top bolt tube. This should move the Bracket away from the Keel Box. Allow more white spirit to soak, then by alternating the pipe to each tube, you should start to get some movement. You may have to use a wedge of some sort to start separation and although it will damage the Keel Box slightly, this can be repaired with filler before replacement. There is almost sure to be further damage as the tubes are withdrawn from the box unless you decide to chisel the wood away from



round the tubes inside the box. Either way, renovation will be needed. Hiran (A95) did not have a backing plate, neither did Paul Harris's A71, so I decided to make one, as the 3/8" bolts holding the bracket had caused extensive damage as they were removed and the inside of the Keel Box needed much repair.

The constant removal of the Keel Bolt inspection plates had caused considerable damage to the plywood on the outer sides of the Keel Boxes. Filling and relocating of the screws was only a temporary solution, so I offer this more permanent idea. Remove the support for the bunk head-boards and make a template of the outer side of each Keel Box, marking the Bolt access holes. Using this template, mark out on ¼" Marine Ply two panels for each side. Cut out the Bolt apertures on one panel, mark the screw holes. using the existing Plates as templates, round the apertures and insert stainless steel bolts size M4 with either washers, or as I used, a brass collar. Then the 2nd panel of ply was cut out round the collars and stuck to the 1st with S.P. or W.E.S.T. This double panel was attached with S.P. and screws to the Keel Box. The circular inspection plates are held on by winged nuts and the usual sealer, and easily removed without damage to the wood. The Bunk supports were replaced and the head-board adjusted (illustration B).

I have endeavoured to cover all the relevant points but would be happy to clarify if anyone wishes to contact me.

(Note by Hon. Ed. After 6 months of soaking, hitting, heating and jacking, I split the tube as described. Even then, it still needed simultaneous wedging, heating and a 5 ton hydraulic jack to shift the last bolt! They all move eventually.)

BOAT SERVICES AND SUPPLIERS

ENGINE SPARES

Coventry Victor

1. A.N.Weaver (Coventry Victor) Ltd, Smiths Industrial Estate, Humber Avenue, Coventry, CV5 1JL Tel. 0203-452625
   Mr Weaver has written expressing his wish to help owners with any engine problems. He is an Associate Member.
2. Weaver and Son, 5 High Street, Poole, Dorset. Tel. 2185.

Ford 100E

New Ford Parts Centre, Abbey Village Centre, Chorley, Lancashire. TR6 8NT.
TEL. 0254 - 830343.

SAIL MAKERS

J.R.Williams, Sail Loft, 34 Satchell Lane, Hamble, Southampton, Tel Hamble 3109.

Gowen (Sailmaker), Coast Road, West Mersea, Colchester, Essex.

ENGINEERING SERVICES

D.H.Burrows Ltd, 184a Springfield Road, Birmingham 13.

YACHT AND SMALL CRAFT SURVEYOR

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