ISSUED IN 1959

Why is Atalanta Hot-Moulded from Wood Veneers?

THAT QUESTION is sometimes asked of owners. Here are Fairey Marine's views on the wood versus glass fibre controversy.

Building boats by hot-moulding them under pressure is a technique which takes advantage of modern production methods while retaining the classic aesthetic and functional values of the boat that is hand built in wood by craftsmen. It produces hulls that are stronger and stiffer than, and just as durable as, those of comparable weight built in glass fibre or any other plastic material.

There are five basic criteria which any hull must meet. These are, high strength combined with low weight; good rigidity and thickness; low specific gravity; inherent stability of the hull material; economy of production.

Fairey Marine found in 1946 that by adapting and improving a method of hot-moulding wood veneers used during the war for producing such outstanding aircraft as the Mosquito, a boat hull could be produced which would fulfil these criteria better than one built by any other process. When glass fibre resin-laminates came along a few years ago as practical materials for boat-building, the Fairey Company examined carefully the advantages claimed for them.

Since there are two companies in the Fairey Group actively engaged in the design, development and production of articles in glass fibre and other plastics, the care with which this examination was made will be readily appreciated. In each case the hot-moulded wooden boat was found to be superior, both technically and economically.

It is stronger, in that for equal weight it is many times as rigid as glass fibre. At a figure of 0·7 its specific gravity is less than half that of a glass fibre material. It is easier to repair. And it has a much higher abrasive resistance than glass fibre, particularly at speeds in excess of 20 knots. Standards of production are far more consistent since shrinkage in the curing of glass fibre hulls frequently causes the exposure of glass fibre, which can act as capillaries when immersed in water.

Hot-moulded wooden hulls sprayed with polyester resin paint require no more maintenance than a glass fibre boat, and for those owners who want a craft with the indefinable appeal and sparkling attraction of varnished wood, Fairey Marine can now supply a clear, polyester varnish finish.

So successful has the hot-moulding process been, that Fairey Marine are now the largest boat builders in Europe in terms of numbers built and types available. Their output is exceeded only by one or two builders in the U.S.A.

More than one-third of all the boats produced at Hamble—and production is now approaching 1,000 per year—are exported mainly to the United States, but also to Canada, South America, Cyprus, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Sweden, and in smaller numbers to practically every other country in the world.

A line of Atalantas in the Fairey Marine yard at Hamble.