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Hi There fellow Bobcat and Catalac Sailors, we hope this finds you in fine fettle as the spring approaches in the UK. The daylight hours are getting longer and I think the weather is showing signs of improvement, and hopefully allowing more of us to get out and about and start those jobs that we have been thinking about all winter.

A Committee meeting of your association takes place this month and one of the main things on the Agenda will be organising the approaching AGM.

Which usually takes place during the month of May. Originally it was held during the Spring Bank Holiday, but we decided to change it last year because of members sailing commitments but I must say that only the committee turned up!

We could arrange a meal and or Skittles or some thing similar this year, if you are interested then please let us know.

Another idea that I had for the newsletter is that we have a small article each month on where you keep your boat? your mooring and a little information on the local area, I am sure you could write ½ a dozen lines or I suppose I should say 5 or 6, give it a try.

More on our approaching cruise on 'Think Again' next month.

Steady as she goes.

Bob Freeman President

TIP of the MONTH

STEERING GEAR

The Catalac steering gear is now beginning to show signs of wear.

Unless like me you have changed it for a newer system.

The Chain and fittings around the sprocket will go rusty and seize up. The steering wires (2) will stretch and eventually break.

The pulley wheels that allow the wires to get to the Rudder Control Arm wear and seize up.

You can still purchase replacements similar to the original design.

BUT don't wait until it fails, Check it out for Peace of mind, it could save your life !

And have you checked your Emergency Tiller lately, its not just for show.

I have had to use mine in an emergency and it got me back to a safe mooring ok, apart from a few blisters.

Mudford Harbour, Christchurch.

5 miles West of the IOW.

The home of 'Think Again' 8/80.

Mudford Quay has a Pub and a Café, and a lovely fresh fish stall, there are plenty of restaurants within walking distance. A ferry gives you access to the other side of the Run, with beaches to seaward and harbour side, also a café which becomes a restaurant in the evening. There are some lovely walks around and over Hengistbury Head. The Harbour extends up to Christchurch where it is fed by the Avon and the Stour.

Bob & Ann

LET US KNOW

Have you or a previous owner made or had made alterations or modifications to your

Bobcat or Catalac.

We would love to share these idea's with other members, and if you also have some pictures, we would love to see them.

A NEW SAILBOAT (FLOSS 9.218)

(after along time)

By Richard Hilley

It was in April last year on a wet miserable midweek morning, just after my fortieth birthday that I first contacted Mike with regard to the sale of his catalac 'Floss'. He informed me that his 9m catamaran was located at Port Leucate - Gulf de Lion, on the Mediterranean coast of France. Suddenly things looked a little brighter.

Mike was going to drive down the following week to tidy and clean up after the long winters hibernation, confidently ready for potential customers to view. I decided to act as fast as possible. Having cancelled and condemned myself and my wife's long awaited and discussed fortieth joint birthday bash to the basement room, I made a booking with Ryan Air to join Mike the following week. All for the bargain price of twenty seven pound return, Stanstead to Perpignan. . The flight was on schedule and after landing, we taxied to within just a few metres of the single tiny airport building. As I and the other hungry passengers disembarked, for there are no free lunches with this airline, passing on through the blazing sunshine before meeting the lone dozing customs officer, I saw Mike for the first time, having recognised him from his wife's description, he was kindly waiting to meet me. Mike led me out to his car and during the drive down to Leucate, he mentioned that he would have to concentrate on the route, because when we would return later that evening to the airport, it would be in darkness. Mike swallowed hard and his face contorted as I explained that I would not be returning home tonight but in 4 days time! !

The journey took just half an hour due to the fast modern French road system, unlike my taxi ride earlier on the painful British motorway's. As we drove through the marina gates I was amazed at the size of the complex, and the acres of pontooned yachts. We passed chandlers, restaurants, marine service centres, eventually arriving at a gated boatyard. Here was where 'Floss' had been on wooden supports since she was hauled out last Autumn. This was the first time I had seen a catalac close-up, never mind go aboard. Mike welcomed me and installed my belongings in the forward starboard double. The cabin appeared cathedral like as compared to my last boat, a *silhouette* 17 foot plywood bilge keeler some twenty one years previous.

Mike had been busy the previous two days, painting, cleaning and replacing some aged headlining to the interior. But outside she looked in a sorrowful state, looking up at the mast the halyards didn't seem to be there, and the radio ariel had bent its support bracket and was pointing horizontal. He explained, "*The halyards could not have been secured to well, and had managed to untie themselves and pull through the mast*". *The three quarter inch diameter bolt at the pivot point near the bottom of the mast had lost it's washer and nut, and nearly vibrated through the mast slot and out of the tabernacle. The booms internal reefing sheets had all come out, and the fibreglass dingy lashed to the bows, had somehow sustained a hole in the side. All this was going to take some fixing.*

I suggested to Mike that I would be happy to work with him over the next few days and help sort these things out. Mike lightened, smiled and said "*thanks*", and by way of explaining the mess said, "*It can get very windy in this part of the world*". A few months later this turned out to be a most fantastic understatement.

We lowered the mast and began the task of pulling wires and ropes around endless pulleys and through slots that all seemed impossible to thread. The second day we were able to raise the mast with the help of John an Englishman also busy working on his sloop, a forty foot Ferro cement, he had sailed single-handed from Britain direct to Gibraltar, then around the corner and along the Mediterranean to Port Leucate. I saw that he had no self steering, and enquired as to what he did when he required sleep on his trip, he said that he would take all the sails down, go to bed, and when he awoke hoped that he hadn't drifted to far in the wrong direction.

I recalled *Shane Acton* did a similar thing when he sailed around the world, having read his inspiring book *Shrimpy*. Perhaps John had read *Shrimpy* too.

(Having owned a Caprice before Maricat 8.52 the editor agrees it took him 8 years the first time but he improved when he did it again.)

Mike and I tensioned all the shrouds, installed the boom and finally ran the sails up. On the third day we repaired the dingy and high pressure washed the hull and deck. In the early evening we joined John and a Frenchman called Jacque, who was absolutely huge, he would not look out of place in a wrestling ring with Giant Haystacks. I learned later and was tickled to find that he was a hospital care nurse on a short vacation from Paris, getting his boat ready for the summer. We strolled down to the nearby supermarket, purchasing *beer, wine and more beer*. Also some rotisserie grilled chickens, a large box of salad and enough French fries to fill a small bucket.

Back in the boatyard, sitting in the cockpit of Jacques sloop, the four of us eating and drinking with no cares in the world, swapping stories and yarns, I felt I had finally arrived John was in fact a saturation diver, who once famously had been involved with the removal of the bronzed propellers of the sunken liner *Lusitania*.

With the food eaten, the beer and wine had also vanished. Jacques large moon lit outline disappeared below, on his return he produced a bottle of pastiche and four small tumblers. We cheered and saluted the setting sun many times, mostly after it had set.

Weary and tired Mike and I clambered over the cockpit rail and down the long wooden step ladder, which in the last few hours had narrowed considerably and become dangerously wobbly. Back on the catalac and into my cabin my mobile registered two missed calls from my wife. I rang Janice, she said "The agency rang and they have couple of months design work for you, the money's good too". I replied that I don't do that any more. Confused, Janice wished me goodnight and hung up.

Waking up at mid morning on my final day at Port Leucate started a little hazy *to much food the night before I think*).

The thought of Jacque appearing with water and aspirins, then adjusting the sheets and pillows to ease my discomfort, soon made my headache disappear.

These last few days gave me ample time to get familiar and have a good look around the boat, I was most impressed, for she seemed so strong and well constructed, with no major cracks or any delaminating to any bulkheads.

Looking up at the catalac it's mast and boom were all rigged the ariel re-installed pointing skyward, the genoa and mainsail were neatly furled. The repaired tender was back at home in it's davits, and from. amateur eye everything looked ship-shape.

To Mike's delight and feigned surprise I informed him that I was going to purchase his boat.

Having worked so hard and learned so much about her, I would be a fool not to.

We agreed a deposit, and produced a small list of items that still needed to be completed.

We made a date for completion of the paperwork and agreed to meet to hand over in mid July at Port Leucate.

This time I would have my family with me and it would be the start of our first summer cruise.

That's another story and you will have to wait for that one.

WANTED

Catalac 8 Mtr. Main Sail in good condition. Contact Peter Gimson.

A RETURN TO NORMANDY WITH ALLEZ CAT (CL 8.184)

By Jeremy Betherton

Bright sunshine and a f. 3 south westerly provided a promising start for the 4 crew members of Allez Cat as we left Cobb's Quay Marina in Poole on 15.6.00 marred briefly by losing reverse gear on the port engine as we waited for the bridge to open. After a brew up and a messy search in among the bilge oil and pine needles the link pin was restored to it's rightful pace and we were soon on our way again. 6 miles out the accuracy of the weather forecast became apparent – fog. It was eerie motoring into an ever thickening blanket with visibility down to 50 yards but an ideal opportunity to test the newly installed radar system. It was even more eerie in between the separation zones to see on the screen up to 8 ships, one of which we reckoned was the Cherbourg-Portsmouth ferry cutting across and not be able to see them let alone hear them.

However motoring enabled us to reach Pointe de Barfleur in time for the 2-hour tide window to take us down to St. Vaast-la-Hogue. It was only when we turned to starboard for the final approach that we realised how strong the tide was. Arriving outside the port at 7.20 am. With the lock gates not opening until 8.30 am. Enabled us to anchor and revel in hot coffee and egg and bacon baps.

After the local fishing fleet's charge out of the lock, we made our way to our allocated berth. Two crew put their heads down and two decided to keep going after the 18 hour crossing and went off to explore and shop. After an appropriate rest, the stayaboards went off to pay the dues of 85 francs a night and recce the ablutions. Facilities were available at The Capitainerie on payment for an 8fr. Jeton but the loos were outside and the showers closed at 5 pm. The Yacht Club, besides having a well-stocked bar, eating facilities outside and in, had indoor showers and loos for the payment of 50 fr returnable deposit. 8 fr. Still had to be paid for the shower jeton. We all met up on the Yacht Club terrace, where we indulged ourselves before moving off to prepare for the evening meal in Le Restaurant des Fuchias for a truly excellent meal at a very reasonable price.

Saturday morning saw us up at 9 am. To refuel at 5.45 fr. a litre (10.3 fr.= £) We had consumed 43 litres on the 75 mile crossing for both engines which we reckoned was half a gallon an hour. While waiting for the ferry bound last crew member and expected friends' boats, we explored the Saturday market and the amazing emporium of M. Gosselin. We eventually met up with our missing crew member after numerous calls to and from mobile phones which, apparently had to be routed via England and back, even though she was standing in the next street. We celebrated her arrival with oysters, fresh prawns and crab cooked in the next door boat's pot. While greeting friends' boats arrivals we were joined by our treasurer Rick Harvey and his wife June, who had motored over from their hideaway near Cherbourg. We were delighted to see them and were sorry they were not able to stay to supper with the other visiting boats.

Sunday saw us following the fishing fleet out at 9.30 am. For a gentle sail past les Isles St. Macouf and Utah beach and 4 km. Of the 6 km. Canal dug by English POWs in the Napoleonic wars, to Carentan. We arrived in the marina on the hottest day of the year. Siestas were taken under the trees followed by showers under the pontoon hose. Those in the Capitainerie cost 8 fr. The only restaurant open on the Sunday evening was The Pizzeria where all the visiting yachties of differing nationalities joined up for an 85 fr. meal to regale each other with improbable stories.

Monday saw us lose two crew who had to earn their living before we moved out at 10.30 am. We were dismayed to run into fog again at the seaward end of the canal, as we had been looking forward to seeing the Normandy landing beaches from the sea. After some debate we decided to press on towards Ouisterham, using waypoints and radar in the hope of the fog lifting. In the event, we just about saw the remaining caisons of the mulberry Harbour at Arromanches. After spotting the ferry, we were able to locate the cardinal buoy marking the final approach and had a lovely little sail up to the waiting pontoon. There we discovered that the lock didn't open until midnight. We were beginning to discover the difficulties of cruising this coast if the tides are out of phase with the requirements of day sailing.

Time soon passed with the assistance of a friendly wine warehouse and restaurant. We arrived back just in time for the scramble into the lock and out the other side for a berth in the marina.

Next morning we awoke to an awful clanking sound, to find a dredger blocking the only exit from the marina. We had to pay a full night's berthing fee and joined 6 other boats in paying the 65 fr. for us all to go in convoy up the river to Caen, before the dredger let us squeeze past. We motored up the 8 miles to Caen in pleasant conditions, stopping off at the Pegasus bridge and a drink at the café liberated on 4th June. After a short wait outside the lock gates, we were through to Caen marina and a tricky stern first into an awkward berth with what seemed like the whole of Caen watching. Drinks aboard one of the convoy yachts was followed by a convivial 95 fr. fixed menu meal with two other crews.

Next morning, after a look around Caen we set off on a local bus to visit "The Memorial" a museum dedicated to peace. It was spectacular. Comments from other English there indicated that such an exhibition would have been preferable to the Dome. On the return bus, we started to muse on lock openings and tides and found 4 other boats already to lock out at 5.30 pm. We paid our share of the 95 fr. bridge opening fee and hoped to refuel while waiting for the Ouistreham lock to open. No such luck. The operator obviously had not read the opening time shown on the board. After locking through we again moored the sea side of the waiting pontoon. And so to bed.

Next morning we rose at 7.00 am. and watched the ferry manoeuvring while we ate breakfast, setting off at 8.30 am. With a lovely SW wind to sail the 22 miles to Trouville. The strengthening wind got us there before there was enough water in the channel. We joined the returning fishing boats as they edged their way up the channel, grounding and then floating off. As we entered the port of Deauville marina entrance was still inaccessible, so we moored alongside the harbour wall just past the Casino and bought fresh fish and prawns from the self same fishing boats. This gave us time to realise that the Trouville marina was right in the town and far more congenial than the Deauville one which was not unlike the Sovereign marina outside Eastbourne in its situation. We locked through at 12.30 pm., found ourselves a useful berth near the Yacht Club. We found Trouville a genuine French fishing port with some interesting shops and restaurants. After a somewhat impromptu cocktail party at the Yacht club, to which as visiting yachtsmen we had been invited, we joined another crew for supper at La Chacutier restaurant, though up an insignificant side street, was packed and produced a delicious 95 fr. menu with a calvados on the house. On the way back to the boat it was disturbing to see the lack of water in the river Touques, which we had sailed up earlier that day.

We had a leisurely start to Friday 23rd. June, as we couldn't lock out until midday with a view to sailing the 10 miles to Honfleur. In the event, the combination of the exhilarating sailing conditions and the obvious deteriorating weather prompted us to go the additional 11 miles to Le Havre. We managed to sail right into the marina and almost to the fuel jetty. It was one of those that you have to search out the operator from the local petrol station. By this time the tide was up and the spray was coming over the marina walls. Our congratulations to ourselves on making it safely in were short lived when we turned the starboard engine on to hear an almighty clanking sound. We manoeuvred into a nearby berth with difficulty on one engine. Discussion and tentative inspection diagnosed an outside problem. No wet suit and no volunteers meant the skipper going overboard in a bathing costume. Relief at finding about 12 feet of fishing net and two metal floats was tempered by the time it took to unwrap, as successive dives holding the breath became more exhausting. Two whiskies, a hot shower and another commendable evening meal consigned the experience to history.

As the weather had not improved on Saturday, we set out to visit Honfleur by bus. The views, especially from the Tancarville bridge, made the journey worthwhile. We found Honfleur picturesque and regrettably not enough time to do it justice before having to catch the bus back. In Le Havre we went into the cathedral, which was on the outside apart from the tower, a non-descript concrete structure, but the inside, where there was a wedding taking place, was transformed by the light coming through the modernistic stained glass windows. By evening it was blowing and raining so oilies were donned for the walk to the Yacht Club where there was a dinner for visiting yachtsmen. Concern was expressed for the likes of us intending to return to England the next day.

We woke on Sunday morning to bright sunshine, no wind and no swell. It was unbelievable. We set off in shirt sleeves with both engines at 6.30 am. for the 60 miles to SC 1, which we reached at 4.30 pm. having had the autopilot on all the way. After a rest to take stock and refuel from the 20 litre jerry can we set off again to cover the 30 miles to Poole. Early sighting of the Isle of Wight and the Purbeck hills in the clear air, made this leg rather tedious. So much so that, approaching Poole Bar buoy, we mistook the outgoing catamaran ferry for

the lights of Sandbanks hotels and had to turn hastily towards Swanage Bay. This manoeuvre totally disorientated us, so that we had to stop, take stock and start again. We secured ourselves to a visitor's buoy opposite the Dorset Yacht Company at 23.50 hours and almost immediately fell asleep.



The Ahart Odyssey

Chapter One



In 1908 Kenneth Grahame published the childrens book classic, *“The Wind in The Willows”*. In the first chapter, River Rat says to Mole, *“Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats...”*

Truer words were never written or spoken. Messing about in boats is a joy that is difficult to describe, especially to someone, who hasn't experienced it. Maybe the closest I can come is to say it is not unlike having your first car, your first house and your first vacation all wrapped into one experience.

Jan and I absolutely love everything about boats, excepting the cost. For us, our boat is our home, our transportation, and our hobby.

To share a little of what we experience, I want to record that as I write this, we are lying at anchor in downtown St. Petersburg, Florida. A stone's throw away is the city park, which is beautifully maintained with palm trees, beautiful flowers and lots of grass. Adjacent to the park is one of the most beautiful old hotels in Florida. The Stouffer Vinoy. If you ever visit the marina area of St. Petersburg, you must at least walk through the lobby of this classic old building. I get the feeling it must have been the set for a least a dozen movies starring Humphrey Bogart or Lauren Bacall or maybe both. A few blocks away is the Salvador Dali museum, which can be visited for a \$9.00 fee. It is worth more. Don't miss it, and be sure to wait for a guided tour. Dali was not only a modern eccentric – he died in 1989 at the age of 85, but his paintings are so unique and complex the average observer would never begin to understand what they are all about without a guide. The guides do not tell the visitors what the popular interpretation of the paintings are, rather they quote the explanations of Dali himself. Back to sailing. Here in this beautiful setting, surrounded by beautiful sailboats from all over the U.S., we count our blessings and enjoy the opportunity to simply be here and see, feel and experience the wonder around us. Our boat is our passport to adventure. Here we sit in the privacy of our own home, surrounded by beauty, history, myriad activities and other fun stuff.

A short description of our boat is probably in order. Her name is “Sojourner” and she is a 1983 12 meter catalac. The name is a contraction of the word catamaran and the designer's name – Tom Lack. The size in feet and inches is 40 feet ten inches long and 17 feet six inches wide. She was originally designed to sleep seven, but we have reduced that to four in that we have converted two staterooms to other uses. Namely a library and a workshop. There are two heads (toilets) and one shower with a propane water heater. We chose a catamaran because of the space, the flat floors, the stand up head-room, minimal steps and level sailing characteristics. She has a sloop rig, which means there is one main sail and a head sail or jib. Two 30 horsepower diesels are also available and enough fuel to motor over 1,000 miles. The fresh water tanks hold a total of 140 gallons. We have a propane oven and range, a 12 volt refrigerator, a 110 volt icemaker, a 110 volt, 600 gallon per day fresh water maker, a 10 kilowatt diesel generator for generation of 110 volt power and a 2 kilowatt inverter which will convert 12 volt DC current to 110 volt AC current. A recent addition is a satellite TV receiver which enables us to receive TV anywhere, which is both a luxury and a necessity in that we watch the weather channel daily. As for communications, we have a ham radio, two VHF radios and a cell phone. For navigation, we have two GPS receivers, radar, autopilot, radar detector, depth finder, and four compasses. For safety, we have an automatically inflatable liferaft designed for six people, an emergency lifepack with food, medicines and water as well as hand held radio and GPS and of course a 406 megahertz emergency radio transmitter or EPIRB. The EPIRB floats and can be manually activated or it will activate automatically if it gets tossed in the water. It transmits a signal to a satellite and tells the Coast Guard who we are and where we

are and that we need help. The EPIRB is probably the greatest safety device available today, other than common sense. For convenience, we have an inflatable hard bottom dinghy with a 10 horsepower outboard. We can lower it very easily and motor to shore if we chose to anchor out, which we do most of the time.

We began our odyssey on the day we retired, October 15, 1999. Well, actually we had to wait for a new sail to be delivered, so we really got underway on the 17th. We left the Baytowne Marina, which is the marina operated by the Sandestin Hilton in Destin, Florida about 8:00 a.m. and headed East through Choctawhatchee Bay and then into the Intracoastal waterway to Panama City, Florida. We could have turned West and exited the Bay by going under the Destin bridge, but the bridge is only 50 feet above the water at high tide and if there are any waves, which cause the boat to rise a foot or two, we could be in trouble because our mast is 48 feet above the water and there are antennas and a light on top of it. So, we took the easy way out and headed for the waterway or the “ditch” as it is sometimes affectionately referred to. In this case the moniker is apropos because a good bit of it is the result of simply dredging a straight and uninteresting canal through the low lands of the Florida Panhandle. However, we eventually reached Panama City and anchored for the night off Shell Point. The weather was beautiful and we enjoyed our first retired night at anchor or swinging on the hook as some boaters refer to it. I don’t really care for that term even though there is a certain amount of swinging back and forth or forth and back as my Norwegian grandfather used to say. He had a point when you think about it. One would go forth before going back I guess. At any rate, we slept well.

The next day dawned cool and clear with a nice North wind, perfect for sailing East or West. Once you get into sailing, you learn that a sailboat will go fastest when it is going perpendicular to the wind. It has to do with the aerodynamic shape of the sail. Take my word for it. The wind was forecast to last for the next two to three days, so we made a command decision to get out into the Gulf and sail to our next destination, which was Carrabelle, Florida, a distance of about 100 miles. After breakfast, we pulled up the anchor and sailed through the bay and finally reached the Gulf about 10:00 a.m.

We decided to sail South about 10 miles and then turn Southeast to sail around St. George’s Island and on to Carrabelle. At an average speed of 5 knots, a little over 5 mph, we knew it would be an overnight sail. We had already agreed upon rules for sailing and at night we take special precautions. Our boat has an inside helm and an outside helm (steering wheels). We always use the inside helm at night and neither of us goes outside without alerting the other. When one of us does go outside, we always wear a personal flotation device (PFD) or life jacket, and a harness. Our harnesses have tethers so we can attach ourselves to safety rings that are mounted at certain points on the boat. Following these precautions will prevent either of us from accidentally falling overboard. We agreed that each of us would steer for one hour at a time, giving the one not steering, a chance to rest. The sail was uneventful. It was a beautiful night with a half moon, lots of stars, a fifteen knot wind out of the North and a rolling sea with waves of three to four feet between crest and trough. All that combined with a few choice albums played on the CD, including Jimmy Buffet, and we had a great time.

We arrived at Dog Island, which is just off Carrabelle about 10:00 a.m. the next day. Needless to say, we were tired, so instead of going directly in to Carrabelle, we anchored just off Dog Island on the mainland side in a gorgeous horseshoe shaped bay and rested for two days. Sojourner can float in less than four feet of water, so we were able to anchor close in to the beautiful white sand beach where we could wade ashore to explore the island. The water at this location is not as clear as Southern Florida, but for the Northern Gulf Coast it is very clear. Most of the time, we had no difficulty seeing the anchor on the sea floor. Dog Island is a popular spot for cruisers because it is very pretty, clean, sparsely populated and is the jumping off point for Southern Florida. The Intracoastal waterway ends here and doesn’t begin again until Tarpon Springs, which is 125 miles to the Southeast, which after Carrabelle, was our next destination.

The next day we visited Carrabelle, which is a delightful little fishing village. We tied up at The Moorings Marina and filled our fuel and water tanks. We also were able to walk two blocks to a Laundromat to wash clothes and to a grocery store to get some fresh food supplies. We had earlier arranged to have our forwarding agent send our mail to the marina and sure enough it was waiting for us when we got there. We spent most of the day in Carrabelle just looking around while waiting for the clothes to wash and dry. Our last stop before leaving Carrabelle was to visit the fresh fish market where we bought two pints of fresh oysters. We left the marina, anchored in the bay and stuffed ourselves with a fried oyster lunch before heading for Tarpon Springs.

Stay tuned.

FITTING a NEW RUBBING STRAKE

The Rubbing strake on our 8m 'Think Again' was getting very tired, it was probably getting on for 20 years old, and before we brought her she had been on charter in Sardinia, so it had done quite well over the years. We had been thinking about changing it for a number of years now and every time we went to the boat show we would take a look and see what was on offer and pick up the brochures but never got around to placing an order.

Any way this year was going to be different so one of the items on our list when going to the Southampton Boat show was to order a new Rubbing Strake, we new exactly where the stand was because we had been there quite a few times before, the stand was **Wilks** who manufacture Plastic and rubber mouldings etc, they were very helpful in explaining the different types available.

The options being to fit the same as we had on now, try one of the new plastic mouldings or the nice shiny aluminium one, we went for the new plastic moulding, white with a black insert, part number : PVC 1613R (plastics have improved quite a lot over the past 20 years)

The next thing was to arrange to have Think Again lifted out of the water to allow us the freedom to work all around the boat while removing the old and fitting the new rubbing strake.

We did this at Geoff Elkins Boatyard at Christchurch and having explained to Geoff what I wanted to do he positioned Think Again on the concrete hard standing at the end of the dock, giving us plenty of room to carry out this work .

I had explained to Wilks the date that I was working to and my time scale for doing the job and they even went into production for my requirements as they happened to be out of stock at the time, but it was duly delivered to my home and we fitted it on to the roof rack to transport it to Christchurch..

The removal of the old rubbing strake was quite easy, the insert was just pulled out, and the main rubbing strake being screwed in place by self tapping screws, these were removed using a battery drill with a screw driver attachment, the fibre glass then required quite a lot of cleaning and scrubbing before I was able to prepare to offer up my first Plastic Section.

The old rubbing strake had a galvanised metal insert so I used this as a template to enable me to mark and drill the clearance holes for the self tapping screws, if you are lucky you will find that the screws taken out of the old rubbing strake will be ok for the new one, I used about 50% old and 50% new.

The new rubbing strake was slightly wider then the old one, which meant that as the top edge position would be the same as the old one the screw holes needed to be drilled slightly above centre, I found that by cutting off a short piece of the new rubbing strake, I was able to carry out the necessary positioning and measurement and marking the off centre line allowing me to position the template in place and then drill the clearance holes ready to fit to the side of the boat, I did countersink the holes as I was using countersunk screws but I don't think these were really necessary.

The next step was to offer up the first section, this was a bit awkward because of the length of each section so I positioned a step ladder at one end to support it and the other end I used a longer screw then was necessary to just hold the end in place while I worked along inserting the other screws, of course if there were two of you then so much the better.

Each side took two and a bit lengths, each being 12ft (3.6m) long. They butted up to each other ok and I fitted extra pieces across the bow and the stern for mainly cosmetic reasons (it made it look nice) the occasional extra hole had to be drilled to make sure of support strength across the whole length.

The Rubber insert was next and this went a lot easier then expected, the top edge being slid into place and using a chisel with a blunt edge and a rubber mallet, I was able to work along each side and then the bow and stern pieces, feeding the bottom edge into place and locating the insert into position. **NOTE:** As an after thought I realised that I could have fitted the insert in one piece, all the way around the boat.

Finally I filled the bottom gap with mastic to seal it off and give it a more professional finish.

