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Disclaimer

Neither the BCCA nor Committee will accept any liability for personal injury arising out of participating in any event, rally or race organized by or through the BCCA whether sustained by members, guests, or visitors, or caused by the said members, guests or visitors whether or not such damage or injury could have been attributed to or was occasioned by the neglect, default or negligence of any of the officers, committees or servants of the BCCA.

Boat Owners Third Party Insurance

It is the responsibility of all boat owners to have adequate third party insurance in respect of him/herself, vessel, his/her crew for the time being & his/her visitors.

Hello fellow Bobcat and Catalac sailors everywhere

September 2007

This month's.....Boat Show "Meet & Eat"

will be held at

"The Duke Of Wellington"

Bugle Street, Southampton, SO 14 2AH

7.30pm. on the first Saturday of the Southampton Boat Show. All members and guests are welcome.

It will be good to meet up with old and new members, but please let us know the number in your party so we can ensure seats for all.

Remember it is the first Saturday of the Southampton Boat Show and space will be of a premium.

Contact Jeremy Bretheron by e.mail or text 07876 581 287

or Peter Gimson by E.mail or text 07971 808777

I hope you are all well and despite the awful weather so far this season, you managed to get some enjoyable sailing in. I would like you to send me notes or stories about your experiences or troubles. I.e. Engine/customs.

Also your favourite anchorages or marinas, the facilities i.e. shops beaches fuel.

Also what equipment has been good or let you down. How did you or the supplier rectify the problem?

The newsletter is only as interesting, or boring, as you, the members make it.

««««WE NOW HAVE SOME NEW BCCA BURGEES TO SMARTEN UP YOUR CAT»»»»

GET YOUR XMAS ORDER IN NOW TO AVOID DISAPOINTMENT.

KAN U HELP

Dennis & Dorothy Noble set off cruising the world 8 years ago. They owned a 9meter Catalac, COURTSHIP 9.164 and modified it to suit their needs over many years before they set off cruising. Four years ago they bought it back to the UK to be sold. Their Catalac was described by multihull world as the best 9 meter they had ever seen.

I once asked Dennis what he used to clean the hulls, imagine my surprise when he told me diluted battery acid. I have not tried it but their boat always looked like new. They have now bought a bigger Prout Catamaran.

The last news I have of them was their lucky escape as they were leaving Patong beach, Phuket, Thailand. They were rowing back to their boat from having a meal ashore with others, when the Sunami hit. The wave just lifted their dinghy as it floated over the crests. Not all of their friends so lucky were thrown into the sea. Their Cat at anchor fortunately undamaged, but later that day on returning to the marina they had departed earlier in the morning, they found most of the boats sunk and the marina unrecognisable. A lucky escape either way.

I have not heard any news from them since they set off to cross the Pacific.

Has any member any news of Dennis & Dorothy?

Has any member any news of who now owns Catalac 9.164 COURTSHIP.

Please e.mail me to pgimson@ntlworld.com.

MY SEASON SO FAR

I am sitting on ME-AND-ER at Newport on the Isle of Wight today, the Fastnet race has just started a day late because of the awful weather. We have been on ME-AND-ER since leaving Cherbourg on 8 July having waited for a weather window to head down to Portbail. Another English couple, on a Nicholson 32, further down our pontoon intended to head for St Peter Port for a few days, as more bad weather was expected, then head down to Portugal. We released their lines and then followed them out of the harbour and headed for Cap De la Hague together.

This being our first trip of the season we wanted the sea to be of the slight to moderate variety. The ideal time to avoid being bounced off Cap de la Hague is to pass at slack water this means leaving Cherbourg with a fowl tide (The wind of course was a f4 on the nose.) and to arrive at the Cap at 2hr before HW Dover. Once past and heading down the race we could now turn the engines off and sail. We waved to the other boat still motoring into the wind for Guernsey. We had thought earlier in the day about stopping at Dielette for the night and continuing to Portbail in the morning to arrive after midday at HW + / - 2hr. to enable us to get in. The sea being kind and the boat sailing at 5-6 knots we decided to continued past Dielette and either head for St Catherines on Jersey (a good anchorage with plenty of space) or carry on to Portbail, anchor off, until midnight when there would be enough height of tide to enter.

The wind has now increased and we expected it to be strong to gale by the morning so we decided on Portbail knowing we would be comfortable and safe once inside.

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We arrived at the entrance of Portbail the port and starboard bouys high and dry on the beach. With 3 hours to wait we dropped anchor. The sky became dark, as first thunderclouds then lightning could be seen over Jersey 20 miles west. Needless to say the storm decided to head our way and true to form we entered Portbail with 30 + knots of wind, driving rain and forked lightning. We continued past the small drying inner harbour and dropped the hook in shelter behind the harbour wall and as we went to bed it stopped raining and the wind eased.

The next morning weather windy but sunny.

Our mistake of last year was scrubbing most of the old antifoul off at the end of August and failing to re antifoul the hulls. Forecast of bad weather made us run back to Cherbourg. Well we now have oysters mussels and more weed than you can imagine. All this took two days of hard work scrubbing. The only good thing being, apart from last night, the weather in northern France was far better than being experienced in the UK. We had wind but it was sunny and no rain other than a couple of showers during one night.

We were joined on the second day by 12m. Dragon Slayer who had sailed from Havelet Bay, Guernsey. He also wanted to clean his bottom, although it had been done at Poole earlier in April. When finished, he remarked that he now understood how the Chinese workers must have felt building the great wall of China one brick at a time. There is a lot of hull to scrape on a 12m.

Portbail is an ideal location to dry and do any little jobs on the boat. The tide range is such that one can pick a spot where one is only afloat for 2-3 hours. From just touching the bottom to being able to walk off with dry feet takes a little over 10 minutes.

Aleck and Chris finished their work on Dragon before us and headed for Iles Chausey for a night before moving on to enter the Rance at St Malo then up to Dinan. We agreed to follow on later when our jobs were done. It soon became apparent that with the dreaded wind and weather forecasts we would be several days before joining them.

With another good weather window appearing we decided to head for The Rance and rejoin Aleck and Chris. The time of the tides meant by the time we floated we would again be arriving late in the evening. True to form the light winds coming from the south ensured the use of engines again. This is supposed to be a sailing holiday!! We motored almost to Iles Chausey watching black clouds move steadily up the French coast and yippee we now had a fresh breeze to enable us to sail again. Now aided by a favourable tide we should make St Malo in daylight. Ten miles off St Malo the wind backed southerly and we started the outboard engines again. They both ran fine then one developed a misfire accompanied by a nasty noise!! The temp gauge was normal so I switched it off and checked the oil it was still full. Restarted the engine and all was fine at tickover but when running it now screamed and then stopped. (Happy Days) We motored into Dinard opposite St Malo and picked up a bouy for the night.

ME-AND-ER has two 6hp 4stroke engines, one in each hull. We also have a 9.8 2t in the centre nassel that we use on the dinghy for exploring new anchorages at high speed.

I didn't want to enter the locks into the Rance with only one hull driving. At first inspection I could not see anything wrong with the 6hp engine so I looked to see if it is possible to fit the 9.8 2t, and change the remotes etc. I had just about removed it from the hull when, as I lifted it, I pulled the starter cord and noticed all is not well. Further inspection showed the nut that holds the drum containing the coils, magnets etc. is loose and is only being held on to the crankshaft by the pull start mechanism. Sacre Bleu!!!

One hour later, relieved, all seems well, 2 quiet engines and off we set through the Barrage and motor up the Rance. Passing on the starboard side, one of Lillie Langtree's old houses now a restaurant with a pontoon for diners. The next place worth a visit on the other side is St Suliac but with the wind blowing into that side we choose the better shelter at Le Minihic and pick up a bouy. Aleck and Chris moved down from Dinan and joined us later that day. Aleck and I took the dinghy over to St Suliac to book a table at La Ferme Du Boucanier an excellent restaurant where you can see the chef working his magic. Unfortunately they close on Tuesday so we shall have to wait until we return down the Rance.

Our next port of call is Taden further up the Rance through the next lock at Chatelier and as the tide is low we pick up a bouy at Mordreuc, well known for the resident seal that relaxes on the beach unconcerned by the children playing near him.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

Close Encounter

The bottle had been well savoured when I cleared my throat and went for it..."thought I might go down to see the kids (flown the nest, to Penzance) for a few days, dear" – "Good idea" Jean replied, "they'd like that".

Great!!

Now, it was subsequently alleged that I had made it sound as if I'd be driving down....moi?!

September was particularly kind, and White Satin (8M Catalac) & I enjoyed a super trip down – steady Northerly force 4 all the way across Lyme Bay – need I say more? After nice stops en-route I had a super week in Penzance and Newlyn, both harbours being handy for visiting the towns and family, having been joined by Jean - who did drive down.

October was beckoning, and so it was time to head for home – sun-rise over St.Michael's Mount for one last time and I was off to the Helford River.

The next leg was to Newton Ferrers, and it was with White Satin sailing herself (with a little help from the auto-pilot) quite happily at around 6 knots that the hairs on the back of my neck stood out, and I KNEW I had company.

I'd had the feeling a couple of times before – and both times we'd been joined shortly after by Dolphins/Porpoises for a bit of fun – although once had been at night and it was more than a tad unnerving....too many late night movies in my youth I guess!

Anyway, back to the present. I looked around – nothing. Hmm. Then a few moments later one surfaced and "blew" right alongside where I was sat in the cockpit – did I jump or what.

I ran for the camera (of course I hadn't bothered with the cam-corder this trip) – but the running part wasn't necessary – I had the company of a pod of five that stayed with me for well over an hour.

They played and played – going under the boat from side to side, diving up out of the water. Swimming in 2s & 3s close alongside, and boy do I mean close – uncomfortably so.

When I'm on my own it takes something special to get me out of the cockpit –and yes I can hear my usual sailing chums chiming in that I never get out of the cockpit anyway, unless to make the tea when it looks like rain – however, I knew something was afoot up front. Strapped on, I ventured forth (Ellen would have been proud). Two of them were keeping station between the hulls, about “a neck” in front of the boat.

Every so often, one would zoom off and jump out of the water before returning to station. Unbelievable. Fantastic.

I swear if I'd had the bottle to sit dangling my legs over the front, I could have touched them.

Meanwhile, the others continued to “do their own thing” around me. I just didn't know where to look.

After around an hour and a quarter of constant attention, and approaching Plymouth Sound, they went on their way, leaving me on a high, with a camera containing around 150 shots (mostly of splashes, just too late!) – and somewhat bewildered.

So, why me? There were a couple of other yachts in the general vicinity, but they didn't get a look in. At no time did I alter course or do anything to attract them or stay with them – White Satin just ploughed on and on, on her own.

Was it the turbulence or wake caused by the Cat that attracted them? Was it the Pink Floyd coming from the cockpit speakers, vibrating thru the hull? Or was I just in the right place at the right time?

“I dunno” but what a privilege!!

Roger Smith

Catalac 8.204 White Satin



Many thanks Roger,

I bet Jean and the kids are sorry they missed the experience.

I don't think Pink Floyd is the answer.

It is true dolphins do love our Catalacs. We have had similar experiences and I agree, when they first appear, often just leaping in pairs alongside the cockpit, they can give you quite a fright. They usually stay in company for about an hour before they disappear, just as quickly leaving. Glad to have had their company but sorry they have moved on. Last year our boat was joined by a pod of a dozen or so dolphins as we left Jersey. They frolicked round the boat. The magic then shattered by the roar of a jet ski as it came towards us. (we all love jet ski's don't we) This rider however, was a marine photographer employed by the state of Jersey. He asked where we were going and said could he join us later to ask how long the dolphins stayed in our company. He had been filming

them the previous day when they took exception to this and kept knocking him off his jet ski. Sooner him than me. It is easy to forget how powerful in their water world they are.

They continued to ride the bow waves of our cat. One couple swam either side of a baby. Truly magical. Earlier this year we met a couple on a Bavaria 30 who had encountered a number of basking sharks between Salcombe and Falmouth. These 20 to 30 ft beauties are a sight to see with their dorsal and tail fin above the water as they glide along with their enormous mouth open catching all the plankton in their path. ED.

Have any other members encountered visitors from the deep?

Out of the Blue

A change from the usual sailing story, for many years I have been trying to find an old school friend and neighbour who I had grown up with during the 2nd world war, but after leaving school I went into the merchant navy for a time and then into the army, Peter, my friend came to our wedding in 1960 and from then on we lost touch, my parents had brief contact with his parents over their retirement years in Eastbourne but I often wondered how life was treating him ?

Now 47 years later and with the use of the internet I was able to make contact with Peters brother Howard and so one evening out of the blue, Peter rang me from his home in Kent.

It turns out that Peter is also into sailing and while we have been sailing the Solent from Christchurch he has been sailing the Solent from Chichester, it is uncanny to think that we may have passed one another or even been drinking in the same bar and not knowing it.

Peter sails what us catamaran sailors call a half boat, but it's a very nice Bavaria 34, in the last 10 / 12 years he has moved his sailing area to the Mediterranean near Barcelona and every year he cruises for 2 or 3 months exploring different parts of the Med with family and friends, he invited me to join him for a week during this years trip to Ibiza in the Balearics.

I flew down to Barcelona from Bristol airport and then by train along the coast to Tarragona, Peter had been delayed because of some strong winds but he arrived at lunch time and found me sitting in the local café overlooking the marina and enjoying the sunshine, we then went down to have a look at 'SandPiper' and meet another crew member Eric.

After an enjoyable siesta we went in search of a local fish restaurant that Peter had visited before but was hidden a bit by new building works in the area but we did find it and had a very enjoyable fish platter and a very nice bottle of wine.

Friday morning brought a leisurely start with a good shower etc and then Peter cooking a smashing egg and bacon breakfast which I really enjoyed as it is not part of my diet these days.

After helping Eric with the washing up we refuelled and then departed westwards along the Spanish coast, there was very little wind so we motored on to the next port of call which was 'Hospitalet' a nice new marina but unfortunately they had already doubled their prices for the summer season so where as the average charge was 15/20 Euros we had to pay over 50. The wind had suddenly increased and was showing 50 knots in the marina office. Any way we had a walk into town and did a bit of shopping, had a few beers, Peter offered to cook a meal onboard which was very nice, with a couple of bottles of wine, finishing off about midnight with a brandy and coffee (very civilised).

The next day we motor sailed to 'La Ametila' and Peter let me practice mooring the Mediterranean way, we reversed in and then picked up a sunken bow line with the boat hook and taking it forward you were able to secure it to a bow cleat, while Peter & Eric secured the stern lines, I suppose I was lucky and there was no wind blowing across the boat, making it more difficult.

The next day 'Monday' brought our one day of decent sailing wind and we were able to broad reach nicely along the coast to 'Vinaroz', very enjoyable.

There was a nice yacht club here and we were able to spend the evening with a few beers and a nice meal before retiring on board for a brandy and bed.

That evening and through the night we had very heavy rain but it was clearing as the next day dawned and we were able to motor to our next port of call 'Cide Orepeza' were the rain came again and we used it to our advantage and gave the deck a good scrub down, it was surprising how much salt can build up during a cruise.

The next day our destination was 'Siles' and our main excitement for the day was being boarded by the Police / Customs, checking our passports etc they didn't seem very impressed with the passport photo's but what can you expect from a photo booth, any way I think we gave them something to do as we seemed to be the only boat on the move that day.

The next morning we had to make our one and only early morning start, to enable us to cross an exclusion zone which was for the Admirals Cup course near Valencia and we had to be over and clear by 0930, we did this without any trouble I think it must have been a rest day as we didn't see anything that looked like they were going to race.

My final port of call was to be 'Puerto de Cullera' which was a small marina berth up a small river estuary, the last time Peter had been here he had been able to go up river and moor at the yacht club moorings, but since then they had built a bridge lower down the river which we could not get under, however they had moved some of the moorings down river which were fairly secure with a day and night watchman, we later found that the original marina berths had been taken over by a fishing trawler fleet with the associated fish market on the shore.

Any way that evening we were able to find a nice local bar and restaurant and sample some of the fresh fish caught locally.

*And the next day I had to say cheerio to Peter, Eric & 'Pipers Dream' & catch a train to Valencia and then fly from there back to Bristol, it had been a good week and very enjoyable, now I am waiting for summer to come back in the uk, perhaps I should think of moving my mooring to the **Med!***

Bob Freeman.

Many Thanks Bob.

I see that Pipers Dream is now in the Med and quite by chance he phoned me last night to say is now at the Island of Elba. Weather hot sunny but strong winds forecast. ED.

>>> **RUSH UPDATE** <<<

Hi Pete and Sue, 29/June/07

Yours ears must have been burning. I was just thinking about you the day before I received your email and I had thought I must email you.

So good to hear from you.

I am over here in Aussie for another couple of days. I have been down here at my Dads for the last 8 days. My Dads 90th birthday is tomorrow so the big party is on. We will be leaving straight after the birthday and heading back home to Gosford. I then leave the next day to fly over to Auckland to spend 2 days with the boys before flying back.

It is a very long way back and I'm not particularly looking forward to it. I think it must be to do with the time zones and landing at airports as going to America always seems to take heaps longer.

I have a 12 hour wait in Los Angeles and Miami. I then have a 5 hour bus trip back from Guayaquil to Bahia. Hoping like mad, I get in at 9.20pm all being well and can get through customs and to the bus by 1100 pm so I travel overnight and don't have to worry about getting a hostel. I will be so looking forward to the rest I think. Alan wants me to wait 2 days before heading on down to meet him. I have the same 5 hour bus ride back to Guayaquil and then 24 hours down to Peru to meet him.

South America is surely a big country but I think a big part of it is the roads are slower to travel on that we are used to.

Alan is having an exciting time in his travels on his own and with Trevor. He has run out of books to read and going crazy he said. He says he is going to ask the first white person he meets for a book! Hahaha. I have my little dopod and have 6 books on there now to read so I will be ok in our travels.

We have to travel very light, one set of clothes basically and wash them out overnight. We go from hot to freezing cold, to soaking wet from dry so we have to have lots of layers as we climb the altitude.

He is going to take me on the last bike ride he did but do it over 3 days instead of 2 and we will be going 16000ft above sea level. He says the trip is amazing. He has had lots of photos put onto a cd and very happy with what he has been taking. Now he is just waiting for me, he still has 2 weeks to wait really so he will be twiddling his thumbs won't he??? I thought he would have taken longer to get down to Peru so he wasn't hanging around waiting but seems happy enough to do it. The altitude took him a little while to adjust to but I think he is ok now. I guess I will have to do the adjusting. I found it really just made me breathless and more a dull headache than anything. We did find we got very thirsty at night as well. South America is absolutely amazing. I feel like we live there, not holidaying and passing through. Just hope the other countries are as enjoyable as Ecuador.

Glad you are finally trying to get away. How frustrating waiting for the weather now. How far are you planning to sail this year. You could always come to Ecuador and buy a motorbike and join us for a few months around South America. Apparently the Ecuadorian government is making things harder to let

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boats get in and out. Don't know why? Tourism would be good for them. We aren't able to leave or enter at Bahia any more without having an agent who works with the Port Capitain. Tripp who owns Amistad where the boats are moored or anchored is trying to become an agent so he can do it. Apparently they let 2 boats leave the other day but no more in or out till the agent thing is sorted. Thankfully not a lot of boats will be wanting to leave or arrive at present and it will be all sorted by the time we come to leave at the end of January next year.

We are planning on coming back to Aussie again in October for a month. Alan's father is 85 and Alan is going to be 50 on September 27th. His parents want him to come home and I think he should with them being elderly and he won't be back till the end of next year otherwise. I am looking forward to coming home then as it will be more relaxed, I have most of the things packed away at home so it will be more of a holiday. I will come down for a week then and Alan will come with me. I will have to get out and about so he doesn't get bored so far inland away from the sea. No sea here, just the Murray River. The weather hopefully will be good then and a lot warmer. Have we been cold down here at night. We had so many blankets on the bed we could hardly turn over. I haven't had a winter for a couple of years, our houses are made for open plan and the heat to a large extent. No double glazing over here. They have wicked frosts down here and been -5 one morning. That is cold for me. We have had terrible weather over here in general this trip home. We have had terrible storms and rain in my area from the Central Coast to the Hunter which is up around Newcastle. There have been dreadfully bad flooding and loss of power to so many homes. It has been classed as a natural disaster. I was lucky, I only lost power for about 7 hours overnight and not a lot of water through the garage. I wonder how Alecks house fared at Gwandalan, whether he had any flooding there, he is flat there. The flooding came up so quick, 11 people died. There were trees falling over everywhere, a container ship washed up on the beach in Newcastle. The sea was full of ships waiting to unload it is a big harbour there. They have even had a lot of rain down here as well and I have never seen Australia look so green and lush.

I noticed scenery on this trip I haven't noticed before!! I think I should take some photos of the Australia I had forgotten had existed. Hope this is the end of the El Nino time and the dreadful drought Australia has been experiencing. Everything seems to have gone up in price since last Christmas, I also notice it too as it is so cheap in South America. Bye for now,
Love

Marilyn and Alan

To see all the photos of their trip so far log on to hotmail go to Alans e.mail address

alanrush3@hotmail.com password australia

.....OWNER'S MODS.....

“ME & MADELINE CL. 9.906”

or

“MADELINE & I”

by John Green

January 11th. 1998 was cold. 3 o'clock in the morning, we were in a flat calm just off St Albans Head, having left Weymouth about 9.00 PM. the previous evening. The twin Volvo 2010B engines of our newly bought three year old Catalac 900 were sounding smooth and fairly quiet. With high pressure and little wind we were on track and on time for a dawn arrival at the Needles and eventually, at about Midday, we hopped to be alongside at our berth in Southsea Marina, Langstone.

Back in the mid 1960's and having been seduced by the sight of half a dozen or so Bobcats “parked” on the sand in St.Malo – or was it--- Mont St. Michel? It matters not. I did become a member of the Amateur Yacht Research Society and much involved with what was then the developing multihull scene. I met and chatted to Bill O'Brian, Arthur Piver, Derek Kelsall, Terry Compton and other multihull designers. James Wharram at Deganny was infecting all who would listen with his enthusiaum for multi's and of course, his own particular designs.

Part of my time became directed towards gaining sponsorship for my attempt at what would be the first solo multihull circumnavigation-to no avail. Sponsors, especially for a young untried and untested sailor were not to be found. When approached Tom and Mary Lack, to their credit did offer to sell me a Bobcat

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with good discount. So that was the end of that particular dream. However shortly afterwards I did buy a second hand 8m. Bobcat around 1967/8 among other boats I offered my 8m. for charter in the Med, based firstly at Antibes and then St. Tropez, which at that time was a largely undeveloped fishing hamlet. For a season or two all went well and I gained a lot of sailing experience. Political unrest in France-at the time-was never far from the surface emerged, and the tourists and charterers stopped coming.

Now I fast forward through twenty-five years or so and many different boats; sail & power: mono's & multi's: timber and GRP. Gaining much self taught experience in building and refitting.

Midday on January 12th. 1998 saw our arrival at Southsea Marina, Langstone Harbour, in our newly aquired Catalac 900, after an uneventful overnight passage from Weymouth. I set about preparing the boat for lift out the following day.

During the period 1994/5/6 CATALAC 900's were selling for £44.000.00 to £55.000.00 depending on specification. This price bracket should have meant that the buyer received a safe, well finished and competantly engineered yacht. However nothing could be further from the truth. I use my boat as a typical example, further examination of other owners 900's by friends and aquaintanances it has become apparent that *catalac 900's of that period were thrown together using a minimum amount of expertise and skill.*

I considered my boat was **not safe** for an open sea voyage of any length. My favourite description of the way my boat was manufactured was that they were built using a *sledgehammer and chainsaw!* The following list illustrates just some of the remedial work required to convert a very sound basic design into an ocean going yacht capable of taking on the very worst of nature.

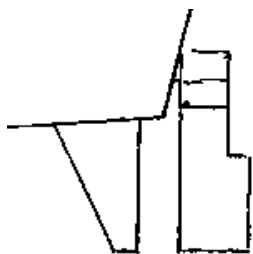


figure 1

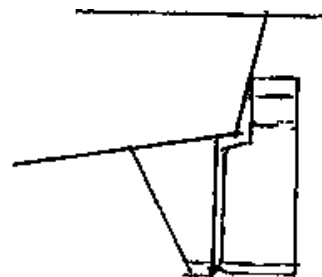


figure 2

- 1) Rudders mounted wrong way round (see figs. 1 & 2)
- 2) Rudder pintals and bushes proportions and size more suitable for dinghy.
- 3) No shoe or boot linking Skeg to rudder.
- 4) No fuel on/off taps.
- 5) No primary fuel filters or traps.
- 6) No engine coolant filters.
- 7) No fuel tank breathers
- 8) No load spreading backing pads to a majority of thru deck & hull fittings. (for lack of a suitable pad we had a deck cleat torn out while mooring alongside at Cowes I.O.W.)
- 9) Insecure nut & bolt fixings joining hull to deck.
- 10) Deck fittings disproportionaly small for 30' boat
- 11) Electrical wiring a nightmare.
- 12) No ring main.
- 13) No 12V ring main.
- 14) No insulation anywhere.
- 15) Poor ventilation.
- 16) Rear deck lacking pushpit & guardrails.
- 17) Pop riveted locker lid hinges

All this and much more on a boat not yet three years old!

Knowing something of the procrastination and frustration of getting boat fabricators and suppliers to do anything in a reasonable time – that is except to give you an invoice, funny how that is always prompt.

I decided to do last things first, so using the basic, corner of the bow, front pulpit sections as a template I drew a design for a full width s/s pulpit. That, together with other drawings, details of which I will explain later, went to stainless steel fabricators, Hilsea Engineering, Southsea. After a bit of a stuttering start Hilsea did the boat proud and I recommend them; but make sure your drawings are accurate. I then removed the old though in excellent condition – bow corners and fitted them to the stern to form my NEW PUSHPIIT. We are now conveniently at the stern of the boat where much of the remedial work was done. The rudders were removed, stripped of their unnecessarily light weight & under engineered fixings and examined for signs of damage, or as the rudders are constructed from 1" thick ply-for signs of rot. All was well. Using the old rudder fixings as templates, I drew up thicker deeper more robust fixings with tufnol bushes to reduce friction. I also drew a design for a hinged skeg to rudder boot also in stainless. This when fitted became the fourth fitment securing the rudder to the hull via the skeg and providing extra security when taking the ground.

Fig1 shows how the rudders were factory fitted. I heard complaints from other 900 owners about excessive turbulence & vibration in the vicinity of the rudders when under way. The reason became apparent when the boat was lifted. The position of the rudders as fitted at the factory meant that the gap between the trailing edge of the skeg and the leading edge of the rudder was too wide, creating excessive vibration & turbulence.

All control surfaces whether horizontal or vertical, aircraft rudder or indeed boat rudder should be balanced, that is why roughly 10% of the rudder mass is in front of the point of pivot. It remains a mystery to me as to how the manufacturers could get this so wrong! With the rudders positioned the right way, the steering is light, positive and without rumble or vibration.

Chapter 2.....yet more expense.

In chapter 1, I related some of the problems concerning the refit of our Catalac 900, launched in 1995. The rudder problem having been dealt with, I turned to the **deck/hull**. The deck /hull through fixings and the undulating apology that represented the rubber rubbing strake. The deck was fastened to the hull by 8mm. Stainless nuts and bolts. **Gaps between the overlap of the deck and hull were filled with mastic,---yes---mastic**, not anything resembling a GRP. bonding! Removal of the bulkhead cloth/trim in areas adjacent to the deck/hull fixings, revealed 2" lengths of protruding bolts that no one could be bothered to cut off flush. The cloth trim had been glued over the top of the protruding bolts in some vain attempt at concealment. I checked all the bolts for tightness—approximately one hundred in number, inserted at 12 inch intervals around the boat. Nearly all were loose and are now tightened.

We set about looking for a replacement rubbing strake that offered substance and style. We found a company called **Wilks** who specialised in aluminium, rubber and plastic rubbing strake extrusions. We obtained their catalogue and asked for a sample. We selected an aluminium strake complete with black rubber insert as a buffer and end caps as trims. The result was perfect. A neat, robust, straight edged extrusion which eliminated the droopy, uneven and rather cheap appearance of the factory fitted rubber strake. Wilks were helpful and co-operative throughout and I recommend them.

One other quirk is worth mentioning. All Catalac 9's and 900's have a design feature—regarded as unfashionable these days—called a broken sheer line, I tried every which way and how to shape- with on site tools, my new ally strake around the gentle curve which is the broken sheer line. Experimenting with odd bits of strake, I tried heat, pipe benders and woodworking techniques—to no avail. After spending a day or two cursing and then junking bits of experimental ally, I gave up and joined the two lengths with a straight line across the curve. It looks absolutely fine!

It's always been my habit to have at least two separate jobs on the go. One inside and the other outside the boat. Refitting a boat in an English winter means that you will be spending

much of your day inside leaving a lot of the outside work for more benign weather. Our 900 had no internal insulation whatsoever. All of the storage spaces and cubby holes and hanging lockers were devoid not only of insulation but also the cosmetic woven cloth trim used to clad the bulkheads in the saloon. Taking a piece of this trim as a sample—the trim, incidentally, being a very pleasant, predominantly blue tweed cloth having the advantages of being both robust and multi directional, I went along to Hawke House Marine in Fareham. Hawke House specialise in providing a wide range of materials and cloths for internal and external use. I needed many square yards of matching material and also what seemed like a mountain of insulation. Hawke House advised me well and were helpful and informative.

I bought large quantities of a closed cell foam insulation and the adhesive that goes with it. On this point, if anyone contemplates fitting insulation, before using the adhesive wear a good quality mask. Without it and working in confined spaces you will be as high as a kite. It is also a good idea to ventilate the working area with a forced draught from one or two electric fans. Everything that could be moved was moved from the boat giving me access to all the internal bare GRP surfaces everywhere. Water puddling from condensation was a constant problem in the port and starboard forward hanging lockers. After they had been lined with insulation – working inside probably compared with the conditions in the black hole of Calcutta – and lined again with cloth trim and then were equipped with solar powered ventilators in the deckhead, we never again experienced a condensation problem in these lockers.

A word or two on solar vents.

On the whole they work well. I would not describe them as robustly engineered. They need to be fitted and handled with care. So far, within the last two years I have replaced two – at no cost to me. The faulty units were returned, in one case, outside the warranty period. The manufacturers did not quibble. These ventilators do a good job. They can be completely shut during bad weather or when washing the fore deck.

The closed cell foam lining applied to all bare internal GRP surfaces provided two benefits; noise insulation, making the boat quieter in its passage through the water and thermal insulation, providing a barrier to heat transference and therefore in combination with increased ventilation preventing that ever present boat problem – condensation.

Once the final layer of interior cloth trim had been glued in place the internal appearance of the boat was changed and much enhanced.

Gilding the lily slightly, I bought twelve number, twelve inch, 60 watt soft glow strip lites and fitted concealed lighting, individually switched, to all the cubby holes and stowage pockets throughout the boat. At night they look pretty impressive, as well as enabling us to readily see what is stowed in some of the deepest recesses. Fitting concealed lighting is something I would recommend. It has an effect out of all proportion to the time, effort and expense involved in the fitting.

Our 900 lacked a 240v ring main; so I took the opportunity while fitting the concealed lighting to install a new residual current device (RCD) and run a ring supplying twelve double 13A sockets.

I know that twelve sounds excessive – and doubles at that – but believe me they all get used. Each engine compartment has one double each. Each double supplies a plumbed in battery charger, leaving a socket for either a lead lamp or power tool etc., - very convenient.

Two double sockets were fitted in the galley. One socket for a plumbed in microwave, one for an electric kettle, one for the fridge and one spare.

Each of the three cabins has a double either in, or adjacent to, with others spread around the boat in convenient places.



To be continued



196 Harewood Ave. Queens P

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“ME & MADELINE CL. 9.906”

or

“MADELINE & I”

by John Green

Chapter 3 – The “E” Thing

Those of us who spend time on their boats all year round, will, at this time of the year be thinking about heating. From 1 January 2003, marinas are legally obliged to charge their customers the same price per unit of electricity as they themselves pay to their electricity supplier. That is correct!!!! Even so, heating a boat in mid winter can be very expensive. Our Catalac 900, whose refitting and restoration is the subject of this series, came complete with an Eberspacher diesel fired, warm air ducted heating system.

My friend, David Thomas, owner of 9m Catalac ‘Aku-Aku’, knows as much about Eberspachers as anyone needs to know. His personal experience made him very reclusive on the subject. He would refer to them - through gritted teeth – as the ‘E’ thing, or the ‘E’ word. I must say, that in the early stages of my working relationship with the heater, I tended to agree with him. He was forever dismantling his Eberspacher and cleaning or changing components such as the glow plug, fuel strainer and the miniscule, size of your small finger nail, fuel filter. I too, had my share of problems, ranging from a more than damp printed circuit board, to the aforementioned fuel hiccups.

Enlightenment! Apart from fitting a waterproof cover to protect the PCB from moisture penetration, I decided to make a new fuel tank and provide a separate and dedicated supply.

The heater drew its fuel from the port-hand diesel fuel tank. The problems that affected the continuous working of the Eberspacher stemmed from the use of dirty or contaminated diesel fuel. Whether the contamination was present in the tank and then clean fuel was added which then became dirty fuel or it was just plain dirty fuel, I’ve yet to discover. Since I have separated the Eberspachers fuel supply and fitted filtered diesel water separators I do not have a problem with either heater or engines. Eberspacher UK agents revealed that their preferred route for successful continuity was the use of paraffin fuel in its own tank.

I measured and drew up a design for a ‘see through’ poly carbonate fuel supply tank. A three and a half gallon container was the result. Complete with screw filler and fuel pick up pipe, the tank full of paraffin would last about three weeks on an almost continuous 50% power setting. The tank was bolted, through its preformed lugs, to the bulkhead separating the fuel tank wet lockers from the engine compartments. Leaving nothing to chance, I renewed the fuel screw and tiny fuel filter. Making sure there was sufficient power in the batteries as indicated by the voltmeter. I started up. Success! I must say that I’ve experienced no problems at all since changing the Eberspacher to a paraffin based, independent fuel supply.

A word or a few about the particular application of warm air blowers to multihulls.

The interior space of multihulls is generally constructed on different levels. On our Catalac 900 we have four outlets for warm air propelled by a 3kw heater. All of the outlets are located at the lower levels in the hulls and cabins. The result is a very comfortable background of warmth circulating at the lower level of the boat and then rising. Everything in and on the boat is dry with the wall mounted hygrometer measuring an average of 30-40 percent humidity. For most of my working life I’ve kept a diary and old habits die hard. From day one of the 900 refit, I’ve kept a diary recording the work done, the time spent and the cost of materials. Apart from a means of reference, the diary will provide any future owner with a ready made comparison of time and cost as well as evidence of work done. The diary also contains my brief comments about day to day weather conditions recording whether it was wet or dry, bleak or sunny. I would recommend anyone starting a refit to keep a diary. If nothing else, it’s an excellent aid to memory.

Reference to the diary revealed a comment about dry settled weather permitting me to start some outside work.

The deck hardware – cleats, fairleads and other through deck fittings were either too small or lacked load spreading backing pads. In particular, the cleats were of the two bolt fixing variety and were inadequate

for a thirty feet vessel. Additionally, the boat lacked an adequate cleat up front for tying off the bow anchor and a stern cleat for the kedge. I bought eight new ten inch, four bolt fixing cleats and set about installation. It wasn't easy. The stern cleats could be reached and fixed only through the stern wet lockers. Arms, three feet long would have been useful. Working at full stretch and with finger tips just in contact, the job was eventually done. Of all the deck fittings, just two had backing pads and they were ply. I understand that most boat manufacturers use some strong, non ferrous material such as aluminium or indeed ply as backing pads. I decided to use something different. Something that would not rust or rot; would not soften or become porous. I chose the material. I'm not sure what its chemical name is – that kitchen chopping board is made from. The bolt or stud heads or nuts are lodged and tightened against penny washers. These deck fixings have now been in place for four years without any problems.

Earlier in this chapter I made mention of diesel fuel water separators. Let me go back a few months to the time of my pre purchase boat inspection. In common with many people, I sometimes look, but don't see. I'm slightly ashamed of this next admission. When I checked the engine compartments, I failed to see that each engine lacked any kind of water cooling filter. I didn't know it at the time, but this was to have expensive consequences later on. By the end of the summer of 1998 most of the outside work requiring the boat to be out of the water had been done. So, anxious to check the boat at sea during the remaining days of good weather and daylight, we were lifted and placed back on the placid water of Southsea marina. Not a particularly intelligent thing to do. The next day saw us motoring past Langstone fairway routing to Bembridge. Those of you who were at sea on the Solent during the summer of 1998 will probably remember – I will never forget – what seemed like, horizon to horizon, or if you like, wall to wall carpeting of floating green weed. This, if I remember correctly was the notorious Japanese? floating anchor that would stop the QE2 in it's tracks.

Our engines are fitted with temperature sensors, fortunately, first one engine, then the other squeaked pitifully. Luckily, the tide was on the flood so with a combination of sail and careful alternate use of now cool engines we were able to return to our marina berth. I set to work stripping the cooling system. I found the houses, waterways, water pump and heat exchangers to be solidly filled with minced, compacted weed. I remember this time most clearly because it coincided with a period of Indian summer with the temperature around a very sweaty 80 degrees and working as I was in the engine bay measuring about 4' x 4' x 3' without the benefit of a cooling breeze. It took about a day and a half to clear each engine and reconnect hoses etc., I then did something sensible at last and drove over to pump specialists Aquafax Ltd on the Hamble. I described the problem and they advised fitting admiralty type brass in line filters on the inlet supply hoses from the sail drive sea cocks. This I did and they were successful – too successful. The problem was the very fine mesh filter. These filters could be removed and cleaned and so they were – frequently. The mesh was simply too fine. I was cleaning once or twice a week and becoming very expert. At about this time people were commenting on my apparent sun tan. I explained that this was less likely due to the benign weather but more to the rush of blood that goes with spending your working day head down in the engine bay.

I removed the admiralty in line filters and bought two Vetus water strainers. These, when fitted provided the correct and practical solution. They are of the glass bowl, see through type. I no longer have to peer over the stern to check exhaust water circulation. Just lift the engine locker lid and there it is for all to see, water chuckling and bubbling in its little bowl. I haven't had any water circulation problems since; but then, I haven't seen much weed, Japanese or any other nationality. The filtration saga isn't finished.

In the next chapter I'll describe the problems that arose from three years of engine use without the protection of proper and adequate fuel and water filtration.

. From 1 January 2003, marinas are legally obliged to charge their customers the same price per unit of electricity as they themselves pay to their electricity supplier.

How much are you being charged in the U.K.?

CHAPTER 4

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More grief and yet more!

Preceding chapters dealt with the problems of making good the manufacturing mistakes and deficiencies of our three year old Catalac 900. We had to put to rights a number of problems including wrong way round rudders, loose hull and deck fittings, droopy rubbing strake, lack of insulation etc., I categorized the remedial work as follows:

1. STRUCTURAL
2. COMFORT
3. COSMETIC

Chapter three finished with a mention of the lack of water and diesel filters and the problems that followed thereon. I now digress. It had, for some months, been a complete puzzle as to why, when filling the water tanks, I would first get a series of blowbacks from the right hand filler and, when, as I thought the tanks were full, we would quickly exhaust our supply. That, as some readers might recognize, can lead to certain tense exchanges between the chief engineer and his mate.

Question: Why were we always running out of water?

Was the mate being rather too liberal with hair washing? Counter accusations flowed (pun intended) a lot quicker than our galley sink tap. Yes, I did wolf tea and coffee by the bucket full, but one gallon of water, in that respect goes a long way. I said I'd investigate. I looked at the fine steel or ally mesh in the water tank breathers. Was there a chance that they were lime scaled, preventing venting? A good hard look and a prod showed they were clear. Next, remove the contents of one hull and park it on the other side of the boat. There goes half a day. I traced the right hand supply pipe - most of it buried - and found an inline non return valve. I removed it, as it had been fitted, blew on it and surprise, it had been fitted into the breather pipe the wrong way round! During a fill, the air pressure building could not readily escape, therefore the tank could only be partly filled - that taking forever. Major reconciliation between engineer and mate.

What other surprises are there?

When we bought our Catalac, the engine hour meters showed, as I recall, about 350 hours which, for a three year old motor sailer was about right. I could not find on board, any engine service records. The engines had not been fitted with any primary fuel filtration and relied solely on the secondary filters attached to the engines. These were removed and found to be almost solid with debris from dirty fuel. Heaven alone knows how any fuel ever got to the pump. Engine servicing complete, I then, as previously reported, bought and fixed two CAV type, fuel filter water separators. I do not know why it should be so, but marine diesel fuel seems very prone to contamination. Because of this, I now change all fuel filters every fifty hours of engine time.

Most of the normally unseen bits of my person are in appearance, slug white. The exception, is the permanent pinkness of my face which relates directly to the amount of time spent head down in my engine compartments. Apart from ludicrously clean engines, another consequence of this activity is that I get to spot apparently strange and sometimes undesirable phenomena. On one such occasion, I spotted a steady and unrelenting drip of water from somewhere close to the water pump. At this point I will make an admission; I am currently and have been so for a number of years, under investigation by a bevy of very nice men in white coats. They say, and I have no reason to doubt them, that I'm suffering from a chronic compulsive disorder which, as yet, has no single name, but is described as: `If it's working ok be suspicious. It's bound to break. So, take it apart and repair it`. If that's not bad enough, this disorder is compounded by another, which says: "If it looks clean and sparkling, it probably isn't, so clean it". We all have a cross to bear.

Back to the drip.

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I concluded that the double jubilee clips on the inlet to the water pump were not doing their job. New, were fitted and tightened. I should explain what is involved in working around the water pump. I lower myself, feet first, into the engine compartment, with one leg other side of sail drive unit. Then leaning forward, as though intent on some fantastical copulation with the iron maiden, feel around the pump with one hand while clasping a mirror with the other. A consequence of this lovers embrace is the neat straight line of stud end bolts imprinted on my chest, working by feel and trying to cope with the "wrong way round" image in the mirror, I set about dismantling the water pump. Among my other personal peculiarities is a water fetish. I do not like it in my water bilges. I will pay any price in terms of effort or stress to prevent water getting in and if it is there getting it out again. Prior to all this kerfuffle, I had for some time been collecting a puddle of water in both engine bilges - tasting was inconclusive, the water was neither salt or fresh, merely brackish. After fitting new jubilee clips, I did an engine run, and yes, still a pesky drip! Leaving nothing to chance, I replaced with new all the original three year old hoses and jubilees. Using in place of the jubilee clips, those rather more expensive clips - whose name escapes me - but which feature a securing nut and bolt, thus giving a more secure tightening action. But, before all that, I'll check around yet again. Did I perhaps, when I used a cup of hot water in which to dip the end of the plastic water hose pipe prior to sliding it over the entry port on the water pump inadvertently distort or enlarge the pipe? Head down, pink ears, cuddle the engine. Disconnect feed pipe and cut three inches off. A touch this time of Vaseline. Reconnect, start engine.

Drip, drip, drip.

Why oh why, had I not sooner acknowledged that the problem of watery engine bilges might be a deal more than a leaking hose or fixing, or something equally simple to repair. The answer is fairly obvious. I did not want to confront the possibility that the answer lay in what could be and indeed was, an intricate and expensive solution.

Water pump castings are manufactured with tiny vents in the sides called atmospheric breaks. They are there to prevent a water pressure build up and therefore the possibility of a rupture of the pump rear seal permitting the entry of water into the engine. I had wasted time and money in looking for the cheap and easy fix. I had removed perfectly good hoses and fixings, when the real problem lay elsewhere. I sincerely hope that no one reading this article has to replace their water pumps especially on the 2010 and 2020 series Volvo engines. These pumps are perfectly good and reliable units and should give many years of trouble free service. In my case, the problem related directly to the boat manufactures failure to fit any form of sea water filtration. My pumps had been in service for a little more than three years without any protection from water borne debris. As a consequence, minute particles of an abrasive nature and suspended in sea water, had entered the pumps and damaged the seals and shaft case hardening - hence the leaks. Removing old and fitting new pumps - insitu, remains one of the most awkwardly difficult and time consuming jobs ever done on our 900. When questioned, Volvo agents told me that a goodly chunk of the engine would have to be removed before we could remove the pumps. I don't want to brag, but I did find a way to do the job without reducing the engine to a bag of nuts and bolts. The pumps are attached to the engines by means of two bolts and two studs. The two bolts are not a problem. One stud is not a problem. The other stud is a huge problem.

Although, I haven't as yet done the work, the bulkhead separating the holding tank compartment from the engine provides a partial solution in terms of access to the pump. You need to cut a twelve inch - or size to suit, diameter hole in the bulkhead. Access to the pump is then straightforward. On completion fit a bomer watertight inspection hatch, thus restoring the integrity of the bulkhead. On a 900 you cannot do this to the port engine because of the intrusion of the "trotter box" in the port quarter single cabin. Removing and fitting a new pump took three working days. Working by feel, and with just enough room to turn a nut or a stud a fraction of an inch per turn and working with a specially adapted thin cycle spanner, laboriously and with much swearing, the pump was removed. With the practice gained I was a little quicker on the port engine. When I tried to source new pumps, I discovered that they were not too thick on the ground. Those that I did find, were very expensive, with Volvo's own being the dearest. I phoned one or two possible sources including Volspec. I settled on the pump suppliers Cleghorn Waring who supplied, along with heaps of valuable advice, the correct new pumps; at well under half the price of

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that quoted by certain Volvo agents. Cleghorn were excellent in every way and I recommend them. Although I did not quickly pick up on the absence of effective water filters on our engines, the delay did not affect the entirely predictable outcome.

Three years of unfiltered sea water guaranteed the destruction of the pumps.

CHAPTER 5

Gilding the Lily.

Our 900 was manufactured during 1995. Perhaps not so much manufactured as bludgeoned into existence. The reader might think that I am too critical. Not so. I am critical but, only with regard to the 'Bodgit and Scarper' lack of build quality used during construction. My admiration for the design skill and expertise incorporated not only into Catalac 9 but also the 8, resulting in multihulls of unquestionable safety and stability, remains undiminished.

Since their inception, more than thirty years ago, these vessels have crossed every ocean in the world, in all kinds of weather entirely without any accident due to the forces of nature. The one exception I believe, was a 9 which had been fitted with low aspect ratio keels-contrary to all good advice. The design of the 8 & 9 offers genuine practicality expressed in terms of accessibility, convenience and plenty of opportunity to tweak or stretch the basic design – the latter always a sure indicator of a fundamentally sound and well engineered machine. How many times have I said a silent 'thank you' when I lift the engine locker lids to check for the sight of water bubbling in the see thru water filter? Or when checking oil levels in engine or gearbox? There it is, all laid out in front of me and ready to hand. I have a friend who owns a rather beautiful Solaris Sunrise, 36 feet of sleek beauty. His engines are buried underneath the berths in the stern cabins, his cockpit, unlike the one level, open area on the 8 & 9, is an ergonomic nightmare, so easy for the unwary to have an accident. When comparing multihulls, there is much to be admired about the advantageous layout of the 8 & 9 meter Catalacs. My reservations are almost entirely connected to the poor build quality, especially in the case of our 900. I approached the remedial work on our boat, not with any particular sequence in mind, but simply, that if it offended my eye or was obviously impractical, then I would change it. Whatever changes I made, had to be both practical and elegant. That, was and still is, my yardstick. Our 900 came fitted with quite a lot of timber. The grab rails on top of the wheelhouse, grab rails on the next level and the cockpit hand rail were all timber, therefore impractical to maintain. These were removed, taken to stainless fabricators, Hilsea Engineering of Southsea, and using them as templates, remade into 'wipe clean and polish' stainless rails. The cockpit rail was modified by the addition of another tier roughly eighteen inches (half a meter) high on the back of the rail; To this was bolted the mainsheet track. This, resulted in some slight increase in mainsheet clearance above the lockers. If I had at the time, thought the job thru properly this additional tier would have been raised to a level which carried the mainsheet clear of head height, enabling a bimini framework to be raised. I didn't have that much foresight. Replacing all the outside timber with stainless has much improved the appearance of the boat and removed a source of maintenance. Oiling or varnishing timber is not for me.

I now contradict myself. You have to be careful when you write.

I make a distinction between timber inside and outside. The cubby holes and storage compartments in both hulls, and everywhere for that matter, had been 'trimmed' on the raw GRP edges with some fairly ugly plastic material which I remembered being fitted to motor cars as door trim during the 1960's and 70's I couldn't wait to get rid of it, though, what to replace it with, was difficult to imagine. I searched the racks at B&Q and my handy, next door DIY shop. I looked at 'L' shaped plastic and aluminium extrusions, and finally settled on a 'hockey stick' shaped timber section. This timber was a neutral pine colour so lending itself to match existing finishes. Stripping the old plastic trim was easy. The cubby holes and storage compartments all had radiused corners, so had to be cut and squared thru 90 degrees to accept mitred timber trim. With some 150 to 200 mitres to cut, I should have invested in one rather better engineered and therefore more precise mitre blocks that are readily available. Instead I relied on my own, well worn, timber mitre block that would not cut an accurate mitre even if you prayed for a miracle. The consequence, was much time spent on filing and sand ing to obtain a hairline mitre. The next problem was how to fix?. Stainless steel self tappers with matching cups, was one option. I rather thought this method would be used in the fore cabins where the GRP bulkheads had in places a slight curvature. I thought I would try glue first. Using a fast drying mastic sealant together with small clamps to encourage adhesion around the curvatures was successful. The results were pleasing, not a screw head in sight. With

a soft cloth, I wiped in one coat of English light oak stain followed by a light sanding. I then applied two coats of furniture wax as a polished finish. Apart from some of the internal bulkheads, it is the only timber on the boat, and being inside does not require too much maintenance.

‘A fair weather sailor am I, am I, ‘A fair weather sailor am I.’ The final line from a dimly remembered sea shanty. I recall one weekend, when some friends arrived at our berth in Southsea Marina to enjoy a days sailing. The weather went temperamental, so we chose to sail in Langstone Harbour, then anchor, at a suitable spot, have a good lunch and generally take it easy. It was early in the year, about April time and a bit crisp – to say the least. It was high water, so we were able to visit the top end of Langstone – to which, I had never before been. It was blowing quite hard, but we found some shelter and dropped our 30lb. Plough over the nose, checked for drift and settled down. A good and tasty lunch accompanied by some plonk followed and we got ready to leave. Could I get the anchor free? No, I could not. Engine power would not break it out. I was certain that we had not fouled. The absence of a powered or manually operated anchor winch and suitable bow roller did not help. Luckily, three of our guests were hefty young lads who now had an opportunity to ‘pay’ for their lunch. Between the four of us we felt the beast break out. Up it came, covered in blue clay, just about the best holding nature ever devised. The following day, saw me hurling down the M27 to Aladins Cave at Bursledon. They had the cheapest price for a Lofrans manual anchor winch and heavy duty bow roller, which when fitted alongside the miniscule factory fitted effort, proved to be the cats whisker, lifting the anchor would no more be a trial. Lifting our 30lb. Plough anchor attached to 200 feet of five sixteen galvanised chain was never again a problem. Sod’s law says that the object you want is at the bottom of the locker, usually when it’s dark. We think we’ve found a solution that does not require yards of cable and an energy source – usually the ships batteries. Our engine compartments are fitted with double 13A sockets for both battery chargers and lead lamps, neither of much use at sea or at anchor or anywhere without access to shore power. Wishing to avoid plundering the 12v electrical supply, I thought of trying those neat looking, battery operated, push to light, push to extinguish, lights obtainable from B&Q and other outlets. They look like a toy flying saucer, about six or seven inches in diameter and from just two batteries give a satisfactory light. Although they can be screwed to a locker bulkhead, this would not be as convenient as the method of fixing I used, namely, Velcro strips. I bought some sticky backed strips of Velcro cut them into three, three inch pieces and stuck them to the back of the light fitting. I then cut three more strips of similar size and applied them to a suitable spot fairly high up on the locker bulkhead. These gadgets are not in any sense even slightly waterproof, so they should be in a position as protected as possible. I put one in each of the two forward lockers in the bows, and one each in the engine compartments. Because these lights are rarely used, the batteries tend to last a long time and help my personal relationship with my wife who tends not to appreciate the rich inventiveness of my language when ferreting around in a deep and dark locker on an inclement night.

Chapter 6.

The last furlong~

The windows on our 1995 manufactured Catalac 900 are tinted polycarbonate, solidly fastened and as tough as old boots. The windows are fitted into preformed GRP rebates and rest on a bed of mastic sealant, then thru fastened with screws. They are strong and do not leak. They are, or rather were; far from elegant. Knowing something of the legendary impact resistance of poly carbonate -I remember reading an account by a Marine Fire Service attempting, with their axes to break into a burning sailing yacht via the windows, to no avail, the impact resistance was too great -I have never bothered to make storm boards. If I ever decided to go 'blue water', I would make and fit poly carbonate 'see thru' storm boards to the five front windows.

Not so close examination of the GRP window rebates showed that they had been very badly trimmed by the manufacturers after release of the deck moulding from the mould. The exposed GRP rebate edge was

ragged, so much so that its appearance detracted from what was becoming a smart, neat looking vessel. The only way that I could see of dealing with this problem, was to apply an external aluminium or stainless steel cosmetic trim whose sole purpose was to hide the unevenly cut GRP window rebates. Was it possible to find this, without recourse to a special order placed with specialist fabricators? What I needed was something 'off the shelf', that could be, if needed, adapted for my purpose.

The route to B & Q is a familiar one.

I looked for and checked various metal extrusions; but concluded nothing that resembled the profile of a hockey stick. I then remembered that during my unskilled attempts to – at various times - fit carpet, I had used a bridging or threshold aluminium extrusion for joining carpet at doorways. I quickly found the item I wanted. They came in 8 foot lengths and were pre-drilled with holes about every 12 inches. I measured and

cut the 'ally' according to the outside line of the fitted glass window. The corner mitres were difficult, ranging as they did thru many varying degrees. Fixing was not a problem. A dab of black Sykaflex mastic at about 12 inch intervals on the inside of each piece, then held in place during the bonding process with strips of masking tape.

Over a period of about a week, I fitted all the windows. The total material used being about 150 feet. The finishing touches were to mask the window above the strip and below on the fibre-glass with one inch wide tape and using a fine cut nozzle on my mastic gun apply a good bead of black mastic as a seal not only to the upper gap but to the lower as well. I bought a box of tiny (3/16) length, pan headed screws and with a dab of

mastic inserted them into the pre drilled screw holes merely for effect. Jeremiah's, of whom there are many, said, that as the ally was not marine grade the job would not last a year. The ally would be attacked by salts in the atmosphere and would rapidly degrade. Five years later I'm still waiting. The aluminium has performed well. It has admittedly lost a little of its original shine and lustre -not a problem. Every two or three months I go around with a tube of Solvol Autosol metal polish and give it all a rub~ It looks very good. It is permanent, and no one who has seen it has guessed its origin. More importantly, and the reason for its use in the first place, the ragged GRP edges of the window rebates cannot be seen and the ally strips have given a more defined and therefore neat and tidy edge to the windows.

A previous chapter mentioned, but not in any detail, batteries and battery chargers. I am convinced that many owners become seduced/frightened by powerful advertising in marine magazines. I am sure that many owners are familiar with subtle and not so subtle trade ads: "Do you really go to sea without our patent thermonuclear deck shoes?". "Are you prepared for the worst? Fit schmucks self tacking galley kettle -guaranteed never to leak and boils in ten milliseconds".

Our 900, bought second-hand in 1998 came with just two one hundred amp hour batteries, one, in each engine compartment, serving each engine and supply-ing the rather slender domestic requirements. Whether they were deep cycle or trick cycle, traction or faction, I knew not. They had been in service for three years prior to our purchase of the boat. I had no way of knowing whether they had been properly maintained or not. I assumed, that, in line with most manufacturers limited two year battery guarantee that they were past their 'sell by date' .I located four competitively priced (£65 each) 100 amp/hr, deep cycle, lead acid batteries

made by Fiamm. Two of the batteries for the by now vastly inc-reased domestic supply and two for the

engines start. All batteries are interchangeable in function via a battery selector switch. Casting around for battery charger prices, I was astounded. Prices ranged from £150 to upwards of £300 for all kinds of clever and sophisticated chargers. Halfords provided the solution. For just under £40 each, I bought two neat,

voltage controlled, polarity protected, 25 amp DC maximum output battery chargers. These are permanently plumbed into the vessels charging system via the battery selector switch enabling me to charge the batteries individually or collectively. The only problem with these chargers is that they are not waterproof.

Condensation on the underside of the GRP surfaces in the engine compartments plus the odd drip from side deck fittings would, if allowed, quickly result in terminally ill chargers. But I had an idea. Jacobs Ltd. make lots of lovely biscuits. They sell their biscuits in red plastic boxes measuring about 10 inches by 10 inches by about three inches deep. Buy two boxes, eat all the delightful biscuits, then throwaway the lids. Cut out one side of the box to form a sighting aperture. Now, after placing the box upside down on top of the charger as though to form a little umbrella, with the cutaway side towards you, the dials, switches and knobs on the charger become accessible. All this works well and the chargers remain dry. At this point in the exercise I had no means of checking the battery state either in remaining charge (volts) or consumption (amps). I looked at the options. Most of the battery state monitors were very clever in that they delivered lots of information; but they were expensive, with an average price of about £150 and I needed two. I reasoned that I could easily calculate amp consumption knowing as I did what each piece of on-board electrical equipment consumed. What I at all times needed to know was the charge state of the batteries. Dattel (UK) Ltd. provided the answer. They make a neat -match box sized, volt meter. This little gadget has a digital display in large, easy to read, format. It's wiring is simple. One connection to the battery selector switch and one to the battery bank common, enables me to see at a glance the charge level per battery. These voltmeters cost between £30 and £40 each. In terms of peace of mind, they are worth every penny. Having looked at and dismissed most of the high tech solutions such as invertors, switch mode chargers, smart controllers for alternators etc. I have a cost effective AC and DC power supply which relies almost solely on regular battery maintenance backed up by probably the best small, portable petrol generator on the market; a 2 kilowatt Honda. Robustly built and as quiet as a loud church mouse when running, this generator, unlike others, does not spike or surge, thus it is suitable to run laptops and other sensitive electrical equipment. I've tried a wind generator, solar panels etc., none, but an independant engine generator can deliver power in the amounts that you need and more especially, when you need it. The exception I make to all of the above, is that if I were disappearing off to the wild blue yonder, especially to some-where with a constant wind circulation -like some parts of the Caribbean, I would have on board one of those newish wind generator imports from the USA that reputedly deliver bags of amps at rather low revs. I cannot remember their name. They look a bit futuristic and are sometimes referred to as a wind turbine. A liveaboard friend of mine, currently in Portugal, has one on his Ocean Twins and swears by its performance. He reckons that in a gale he gains enough power to cook a five course dinner in his 3Kw oven and do the ironing at the same time~

I'm suspicious.

There are few situations more satisfying than setting a cruising chute under a gentle summer c-r breeze for a blissful down-wind romp. How often does it happen? Hardly ever. When it does, heaven opens its

front door. This all too rare event can be better savoured if after setting the autopilot, or other-wise securing the helm, you amble up to the front end to admire the easy gliding motion of just the most adorable craft in the universe. This 'top job' pleasure is much enhanced if you can do it from the comfort of bow seats. How to do this in the most cost effective way, put me into deep thought. Our pulpit -unlike some -does not follow the plan contours of the bows. Our particular pulpit forms a right angle at each bow. Material options were: GRP, timber, stainless steel and aluminium. Some readers may recall my antipathy towards external timber. Stainless was possibly too heavy. Aluminium would not provide the necessary stiffness. So, it would be GRP or something similar. Where would I find panels of sufficient length, thickness and rigidity? Moulding them was not on. Apart from the lack of somewhere to work under cover, DIY would be too time consuming. B & Q, here we come. My local store, or should I say, Hyperstore, is at Leigh Park, just off the

Portsmouth end of the A3. It is huge. Its sheer size prevents you from quickly finding whatever you are looking for. Eventually the building materials section provided the answer. What I found was a thru coloured white board. It looks like GRP, feels like GRP, but isn't. It is rotproof, unaffected by oil or water or anything the weather can throw at it. I believe that it is the material that modern windows and doors are very

often made from: UPVC, or poly vinyl chloride. It comes in a variety of lengths. Widths are from about 6 inches to fifteen inches. Its common use is by builders in forming soffits and fascias on houses etc. It has a preformed curved edge to one side which conveys extra stiffness and rigidity. I bought a ten feet length measured the angle formed by the front and side of the pulpit and cut the board to the desired shape and length. The board is about half an inch thick. so, after cutting to shape, I glued a half inch white plastic angle strip! to the cut edge to provide a neat, protective trim. The next problem was the two wet lockers positioned in, each bow, just underneath where the two bench seats would be fixed. Stowed in these lockers are various items such as spare anchors, chain, diesel fuel jerricans and spare water containers -so, ready access is important. With the two bench seats fixed permanently in place, the locker lids could be only partly lifted, so access was limited. The solution was to fix the seats with one inch diameter, plastic pipe clips, the

sort you can find in any DIY or plumbing shop. These pipe clips are open jawed and when in place are under tension and very robust. When I need access to the wet lockers, I simply remove the seats, and replace takes one minute or less the time scrabbling around in the locker. This PVC board, while suitable in most respects, had one fault. Being just half an inch thick and spanning a gap of about three feet, there was a tendency to deflect or sag about one inch or so, from the horizontal, when sat on by someone weighing about eleven or so stones -me~ I cut and fitted two short lengths - about twelve inches of one inch stainless steel. One end secured to the underside of the seat, by means of a screwed wardrobe rail fixing the other end that rested on the deck, or rather the lid of the locker, fitted with a walking stick rubber ferrule.

This support eliminated the deflection and being detachable, gave me ready access to the lockers.

You might think it could be fun to go sailing, get away from the wife the daily humdrum and every thing else but what are you letting yourself in for ?

What do you know about the boat ? not a lot, only what the friend has told you.

How well do you know your friend ? life on a boat is very different from life at home.

Questions :

Is he competent, is he domesticated, how is his health, what is his general attitude and conversation like, is he a Jeckle and Hyde ?

Is it worth joining him overseas, spending your own hard earned money, for what could be the trip of a lifetime, a thought ? can you get back home if need be ?

I recently travelled St Malo to join a friend in the Morbian, he met me by car and whisked me into the French country side, this is lovely, I thought.

We parked the car, put on our wellies and waterproofs as the month was May and the weather was still a bit changeable, we loaded up launched the dinghy and away to a mooring in the middle of the river, this is nice I thought to myself.

We boarded the boat, I thought she looks alright with new antifouling and reasonably tidy.

I was shown my cabin and told it might be a little damp but it will soon dry out, there was quite a lot of water in the bilges and some of the lockers but he made no attempt to dry them out, the wood work needed some tlc, it had mould appearing and very little varnish on it.

I went to put the kettle on for a cup of tea my friend said it takes five pumps of the tap to make one cup of tea so only pump it ten times for two cups we don't want to boil water unnecessarily ok I thought, quite a sensible idea. He also gave me a mug to use in the heads that was my allowance of water to wash and clean my teeth.

A quick look at the cooker it looked a bit greasy the washing up hadn't been done *lately* and the bowl that it was in was covered with antifouling and the work surface was a bit stained and rather cluttered.

Any way we had a cup of tea and we discussed a few proposals for our pending trip to the Mediterranean! but we can't go yet as I am waiting for a letter to arrive said my friend.

He showed me how he had changed all the interior lights for led's (light emitting diodes) to save battery power. Possibly a good idea but the wiring was stretched around the cabin like numerous washing lines.

I went to use the heads (toilet) he said make sure you sit down as I don't want you spraying it around, which is a sensible idea but one look and it was disgusting, brown stains around the seat and extending down into the bowl the pipe work looked as though it had never been cleaned and the sink was more black then white, have you got any bleach I asked and the answer being no, so it was the first thing to go out and buy the next day.

His priority seemed to be the computer playing with Maxsea navigational and weather programs he also had a health problem that he wouldn't admit to, he had developed thrombosis while in France and although he had received treatment there was still a problem and he had a various supplement of pills to take. During the day he would often say he was tired and disappear into his cabin or he would say he was hungry and make himself a meal, not asking me if I would like some.

There was quite a lot of food on board so I thought at least we wont go hungry, but it turned out that some of the tins were 8 to 10 years old, he admitted that he had brought them cheap, one day he wondered where the fly's were coming from and one of the tins of meat had rusted away and was alive with maggots, he was eating yoghurt and ham amongst other things that were at least 3or 4 months past there sell by date, he would cook a stew and leave leftovers in the pan for days and then just add some more to it, I asked if there was another pan to cook some potatoes in and he said there was one in the bottom locker, when I found it, it was heaving, having been put away dirty, I'm afraid that was my final straw the next day I jumped ship and came back home.

My other concern is that he has advertised internationally for crew, a male teacher coming over from America for a couple of months, a lady university lecturer also wanting to gain sailing experience is preparing to join him, perhaps I should have made an entry in the log.

Warning >>>> Health hazard Beware all who sail in her