



In September 1960 I bought a three year old Atalanta which was owned by a fellow member of the Medway Yacht Club. I bought it for four main reasons. I wanted a transportable yacht so that, with fairly short holidays, the areas in which I could cruise were virtually unlimited. Secondly I wanted a boat which was large enough to sail on her own bottom anywhere; before the war I had sailed down to the Bay of Biscay in a 25ft 6in Vertue and I reckoned 26ft was about the minimum overall length. Thirdly I wanted a boat I could maintain at home and for this purpose I had built a Dutch Barn. EPENETUS has always laid up there and during 25 years; no yard has ever been concerned with her maintenance. Lastly and possibly most important, I wanted a shallow draft boat which could anchor in places not accessible to deep draft yachts and it has always been my joy to find what I call Atalanta anchorages where no deep draft yacht can moor.

Living in Kent, the Medway at Upnor is very accessible and what is more the river is uncrowded. With an early start and the tides right it is an easy sail over to the Essex shore with lunch either in Leigh Creek or in the shelter of the artificial island which was built on the edge of the Maplins when the airport was proposed or, with a good breeze, it is a very pleasant sail round Sheppey. In the Medway itself there is one anchorage to which I returned time and again just off Sharfleet Creek where there is a breach in the sea wall and inside a pool with room for an Atalanta to swing in 2ft of water at low water springs and nothing around but the Salt marshes; a perfect Atalanta mooring.

But it was for holidays that we really kept EPENETUS and the joy of a transportable boat is that you hardly ever have to cruise in the same area twice. Holland was an exception as, moored in the Medway, it was so easy to sail over there with young children it is an ideal cruising ground.

1961 I sailed with friends over to Holland and, as I wanted to cruise with my family in Friesland, I lent the boat to my friends who sailed it to Grouw in Friesland. We took over in Grouw and had a weeks cruising there before crossing the IJsselmeer to Enkhuizen and then south by the ordinary route through Amsterdam Delft and Rotterdam to Flushing.

With my two sons as crew I decided to shorten the sea passage home by going down the coast, stopping at Zeebrugge and Dunkirk before crossing to Ramsgate. In Ramsgate harbour I remember my younger son then aged 13 asking "On Monday we were in Holland (Flushing), Tuesday in Belgium (Zeebrugge), Wednesday in France (Dunkirk), Thursday in England (Ramsgate). What country tomorrow?" The answer I am afraid was 'Sheppey'.

1962. We explored the East Coast to Aldeburgh. A lot of good Atalanta sailing, like the Walton Backwaters and the upper Alde. It is little wonder that Atalantas which used to be so strong in the Solent now seem to be more numerous on the East Coast.

1963. Following a skiing holiday, in Zermatt I had a serious illness and the summer holiday had to be short. We launched in Morgan Giles yard at Teignmouth and cruised to the River Avon, a perfect Atalanta harbour with a bar which virtually excludes deep draft yachts.

1964. We were back in Holland cruising in Zeeland and to Brielsemeer.



1965. We did our first long tow, trailing up to Ardrossan in Ayrshire and then cruising the West Coast of Scotland to Eigg and Canna and to that perfect Atalanta anchorage on the north side of Soay. A tiny landlocked loch with a rocky bar at the entrance where the depth meter reading dropped from 2ft to 22ft in less than a boats length as we entered. The cruise is described in Atalanta Journal 1965/66.

1966. We decided to sail on the Biscay Coast. We crossed by Thoreson Ferry to Cherbourg and spent the first night on dry land alongside the Yacht Club at Granville which provided all facilities. We launched at Vannes the following day and, after exploring the Morbihan, we visited the offshore islands of Houat, Belle Isle (anchoring in Adlard Coles sensational crack in the cliff at Ster Wenn) and Port Tudy on Ile De Groix which in 1939 had been so full of Tunnymen that there was hardly room for a single yacht. Now there are no Tunnymen but so many yachts that there was even less room. Then we cruised up as far as Concarneau and back to Vannes. While craning the boat out we met the owner of a new yacht yard in the Morbihan who suggested we should put the boat in his new undercover storage for the winter and, on the spur of the moment, we did as he suggested.

1967. EPENETUS had wintered in Tattévins covered boatyard in the Morbihan and we launched her there and sailed south to La Rochelle, a cruise which is described in the Atalanta Journal 1967-68 under the title "Six Islands on the Brittany Coast".

1968. After four years absence we decided to revisit Holland, sailing to some of the less frequented harbours in Zeeland such as Camperland, Colinsplaat, Brunisse, Bergen Op Zoom and Terneuzen.

1969. We decided to cruise to the Channel Islands and launched at Fairey's Yard on the Hamble in time to compete in the Atalanta Class in the Round the Island Race due to start on the following day. There is an account of the race in the Atalanta Journal 1969-1970, an unusual account for a race description as it never mentions the winner. After that we sailed to Alderney, Guernsey, Herm and Sark and back to the Hamble. I did not relish the tow home but David however was keen to race his Firefly on Saturday so he towed the empty trailer back and Robert and I had a quick sail round the coast, putting in at Newhaven and Ramsgate, and reaching the Medway three days later.

1970. We were getting more ambitious and decided to trail to the Mediterranean at Cannes and then go south down the West Coast of Corsica and the East Coast of Sardinia. My younger son was at the University and could be away for a full five weeks. I accompanied him for the first three weeks on the outward journey to Sardinia and back to Bonifacio in southern Corsica. My elder son accompanied him for the return journey. The cruise is described in the Atalanta Journal 1970-1971 under the title "Corsica and Sardinia".

1971. We sailed locally.

1972. Even in an Atalanta life is not all plain sailing and 1972 was a year of disaster.



We launched the boat in the Medway and were sailing it up to our mooring when I winched the starboard plate, the gear gave way and the plate swung to a vertical position. The description of the temporary repairs is set out in the Atalanta Journal 1972-1973 and it was clear that we could not go on a substantial cruise till the boat had been hauled out and a permanent replacement fitted to the plate lifting gear. That year I had to content myself with crewing on a friend's yacht across the Bay of Biscay from N.W. Spain. In the winter 1972-1973 we had the plates out and replaced the lifting strops in Stainless Steel and at the same time replaced the three C.B. bolts on each keel in stainless steel. We also scrapped the swashboards and fitted neoprene rubbers each side of the C.B. case, an improvement which not only improved her sailing performance but enabled one to ensure that the plates were kept reasonably clean.

1973. My son daughter and I decided to cruise in the Danish Islands and we shipped the Boat, trailer and Landrover on the Winston Churchill from Harwich to Esbjerg and then trailed the short distance across the peninsular to Kolding and launched into the Baltic. We enjoyed an excellent three weeks cruise which I described in the Atalanta Journal 1974-1975 under the Title "Epenetus in the Baltic". At the end of our cruise my elder son took over for a further cruise and, returning to Esbjerg, found there was no room on the normal ferry to Harwich. However he was taken on the commercial roll on roll off route for heavy lorries to Hull. He was treated like a lord and sat at the Captains table!

1974. My son had just qualified and we decided to take six weeks holiday and return to the Baltic, but this time to Sweden and Finland. We shipped the boat on the Tilbury-Gothenberg Ferry and crossed Sweden on the Gota canal which connects a series of large lakes, the largest (Vannern) being about 70 miles across. We cruised north up the east coast of Sweden and then crossed to the Aland islands and on to mainland Finland. In the space available to me, it is not possible to describe the cruise in detail but the highlights were a visit to Kivskar, said to be the most beautiful anchorage in the northern hemisphere, a visit to Kokar a fairly remote island south of the main archipeligo and the cruise round the northern side of Aland which is not much frequented by yachts.

Since 1974 I have sailed the Atalanta locally enjoying the early Atalanta meets at West Mersea in 1976 and 1977.

Modifications and Improvements

Other Atalanta Owners will be interested in what modifications or improvements I have made in these 25 years. The answer is — very few! We still have varnished cabin top, cockpit and upper topsides and have never fitted a pulpit or lifelines though we always carry harness and gear for all the crew.

The rig is still the standard original rig though we do carry a lightweight masthead genoa for use in light weather.



I liked the original Atalanta Dinghy but we had to replace it with an inflatable dinghy because on long trails the excessive weight at the rear end of the Atalanta produces trailer snaking.

The standard Fairey lifting gear we found essential as we always craned the boat in rather than put the trailer into salt water.

Mast lowering had to be arranged so that we were independent of any outside help and so that the gear was not cumbersome and could always be carried on board. To support the mast as it comes down, we use the forehalliard and the main sheet tackle with the Spinnaker Boom as a strut to the base of the mast. It is, however, still necessary to ensure that the mast stays on the centre line of the boat as it comes down. To do this, we use the triangles designed by R. Reynolds (formerly owning A 58). These fit to the base of the shrouds and ensure that the main shroud passes round a bobbin which is exactly in line with the mast pin. As the mast comes down the main shrouds are always taut and the mast therefore cannot sway across the boat.

Atalantas are like dinghies and sail best when not overloaded. We removed the water tank partly because it was so heavy and partly because we rarely sailed where it was possible to fill a tank from a hose. In its place we use 2 gallon plastic water cans and have room for a hanging oilskin locker.

25 years ago I could have bought a traditional yacht and sailed her in areas which could be reached from her moorings during a two or three week holiday. But with an Atalanta it has been possible to cruise over a very wide area and the variety has been infinite. They are wonderful boats for doing just what they were designed to do.