

Atalanta

1996—1997



ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

38th Edition

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Frontispiece: HIRAN waiting for the wind at Mersea (Photo: M Jenkins)

FROM THE COMMODORE

Charles Currey

Another great year for the Atalanta family of boats. Fairey Marine's Regatta at Hamble to celebrate their 50th Anniversary (1946-1996) given by MDL at their Hamble site produced some very good examples of Fairey boats, both sail and power, from the tiny Pixie canoe and the 12 foot Firefly used as a single handed boat in the 1948 Olympic Games at Torquay, and a whole range of other dinghies as well, to the larger sea going boats including of course, Atalantas. Seven, if I remember rightly, including one brought down on a trailer all the way from Scotland. There would probably have been more entrants but for a fairly poor weather forecast a couple of days before. Among these boats there was present, as you would expect, Atalanta 183 called Bluster and owned by Ted and Jane Stearn. Ted was our Vice Commodore and a pillar of our Association, and if I use the past tense here it is with sorrow that he is no longer with us. Not, that is, in person. But always in spirit, and in the hearts and minds of those who knew him. And to Jane and her family our sympathy and support, for she too has been a pillar of the Atalanta Association.

Nor would he have expected me to end here, but to move on in appreciation and gratitude for the arrangements made by MDL for the celebration of 50 years of remarkable achievement. For the bringing together of so many craft, small and large, power and sail, into one grand parade. For the entertainment of some two hundred and fifty guests (and if I don't remember going home let this stand as a tribute to the quality of their hospitality!) And finally to thank Robert Iliffe, now Lord Iliffe, and all the MDL team at Hamble for a truly memorable occasion.

And so to 1997, and to cruises where only Atalantas can go, and other craft can only dream of.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Our Commodore has invented an amazing new means of communication, being a sort of voice fax, which would work very well if the recipient was prepared for it. I wasn't. So one windy October day the telephone bell rang, and a voice at the other end said "Editor?"

"Yes" I said "That's me".

"Got any recording equipment handy?"

That was a fast one.

"I've got my bit ready here for the Bulletin and I can read it out to you".

So it was Himself. Better look slippy.

"I'll see what I can do".

"That's all right. I'm quite happy hanging on here".

May be. But this could be an expensive call.

In fact I did find a tape recorder fairly handy. One which could, in technological terms, be accurately described as antique. I use it for recording the annual morning chorus of birdsong, and hoped that on this occasion it would accept something other than twittering.

It was all there where I had put it away in the spring - recorder, microphone, mains lead, tape. Fine, until I realised that the only tape I had was one on which I had recorded all my wife's interviews on Thames Radio. So, find an empty space on that tape or face the doghouse. I found an empty space.

I don't know whether you've tried holding a microphone to the ear piece of a telephone, while at the same time placing your ear close enough to hear what is being said, and with your other hand pressing the play and record buttons, and writing down what is being said. If anyone had looked through my study window at that moment they would probably have sent for an ambulance.

"OK, I've got it all down", (except for the crackly bits when the microphone slipped).

"Well done. Edit it how you like. Make it light hearted, "Bye".
I felt quite pleased, until I realised that I would now have to type it all out.
Commodore 1. Editor 0.

As you will see in the rest of the Bulletin, we are short of cruises this year, and I have published one by Peter Martin which has never been published before and by the time you get this Bulletin will have taken place ten years ago, and may perhaps stir a few memories. Otherwise may I thank you for your support. May I also thank Marina Developments Ltd for their hospitality on the occasion of Fairey Marine's 50th Anniversary, and may I congratulate all those Atalantas that took part - Achates, Aquilo 2, Bluster, Arosa, Johara, Atalanta Mary and Salizanda - I hope I haven't left anybody out.

Finally, and sadly, may I pay my last respects to Ted Stearn, Soldier, Sailor, Vice Commodore and pillar of our Association.

EAST COAST RALLY 1996

By Mike Lewis - Modestine A48

Well, we made it! Three and a half years of restoration work on A48 was at last paying off and we were ready for the start of the annual race at West Mersea Town Regatta.

We had spent the night in Besom Channel next to one of the few G.R.P. yachts I have ever coveted, a 30ft Santander class with exquisite lines owned by Brian Kennell, who was to be my crew for the race.

Brian was my secret weapon, born and bred at West Mersea, he had sailed the smack Hyacinth since the age of eight with no little success, and I had been fortunate to be part of his crew in many exciting races in past years.

We woke at around 7.30 am to find an absolute flat calm. We motored out to deeper water near the Nass, anchored and had breakfast; and then learned that the start was to be delayed by 2½ hours. The Officer of the Day must have had second sight because, dead on cue, a beautiful sailing breeze set in from the east putting the first mark to windward. The start was a credit to the A.O.A. most of the seven competitors crossing the line within a couple of seconds of the gun. Modestine crossed the start-line in about third place, but at the windward end and footing fast, we soon pulled out a nice lead with one other, I believe Arosa, in close pursuit. With Brian making sure that I paid strict attention to the job in hand we had about ten minutes lead by No 6 buoy (the first mark) and our lead increased as we headed up river gaining the advantage of a following wind and the flood tide. At about halfway to the next mark we had the strange sight of the classes which had started earlier coming towards us with spinnakers set. Shortly afterwards we fell into the hole in the wind between the two opposing air streams. At Brian's urging we kept well up-tide of the mark to avoid the need to use the kedge. Although on the face of it a prudent move, it didn't pay off as well as we had hoped, as a good westerly set in giving the advantage to the less cautious competitors just ahead, most of whom were in the Portsmouth Yardstick 1051 and Above Class which had shared our start time.

We sailed a brisk reach across to No 12 on the south shore off Bradwell power-station, and fell straight back into the flat calm. The rest of the fleet were closing on us rapidly, and the leaders of the chasing group of Atalantas were just rounding the mark when, just as I was running out of finger nails, the wind picked up to about Force 3 easterly enabling us to complete the 14 n.m. course with our lead intact, and in company with Spring Moon the eventual winner of the P.Y. Class.

We had a celebratory beer in the yacht club, and then we set off with our wives Sally and Jackie to Gun House to enjoy the hospitality of General and Mrs Odling. The General plied our ladies with truly military strength G & T's and an excellent fish and chip supper was followed by a quick dash back to West Mersea in order to pick up our plate at the prize presentation.

Thanks to everyone involved in the organisation of this most enjoyable event.

Result - East Coast Rally 1996

- | | | | |
|----|------------|------|-------------------|
| 1. | Modestine | A48 | Mike Lewis |
| 2. | Arosa | A104 | Simon Cooper |
| 3. | Kookaburra | A168 | Norman Dorrington |

4.	Emma Duck	A179	C M Mitchell
5.	Hiran	A95	Colin Twyford
6.	Gambol	A17	Mr & Mrs Marshall Jenkins
7.	Bluster	A183	Ted and Jane Stearn

MARINA DEVELOPMENT'S FAIREY 50TH ANNIVERSARY REGATTA

By St John Greenhough

It always takes longer getting Johara on the road than we think. This year I had my normal work to do before the off which delayed the process until 1100. In the meantime Bertram, son and John, father, were completing the loading as far as they could without the towing vehicle. For the first time this was a Discovery which had replaced the previous Landrover Defenders. We finally left Lytham at 1405 and made a fast run, arriving at Hamble Point Marina at 2130 when the priority was food which we ate in Hamble village. Next morning at 0630 we started the process of rigging and launching. Par for the course is four hours and we were actually afloat by 1100. We victualled with fresh food and bought new charts of the Solent as the last time I sailed there was thirty years ago. Things had not changed much. We had a nice sail over to Cowes in a lively wind. The following day we sailed what we thought would be the course and gave the final adjustments to the sails and rigging. Throughout, MDL in the shape of Jeff Houlgrave and Linda Jones, were supportive in every way. The staging started to fill with all manner of Fairey craft, some of which were having separate races. But of the Atalantas there were A60 Achates, A102 Atalanta Mary, A104 Arosa, A148 Johara, A150 Salizanda, A183 Bluster, A184 Aquilo II (MDL owned boat). The favourites were Arosa, Bluster and, of course Aquilo which was to be sailed by the MDL MD Mike Tufnell.

Came the day overcast and gusty four to five. Perfect Atalanta weather. We were briefed but all the skippers were a bit confused, (well I was!), until we actually reached the start line when all became clear. The course - leaving Cathead to port we had a long reach to Meon with Arosa and Aquilo pulling away into the distance. When they cleared Calshot Point and felt the full force of the wind they had to reef down and missed the mark first time; this gave the rest of the fleet time to close up and the gap was never as wide again for the leaders. We were second round Meon, and we started a beat to windward to North Knoll and lost ground; we lost more ground on the reciprocal run to Jardines because we did not fly our spinnaker. Bluster and Achates did and were well up in the race with Bluster first round Jardines leaving us trailing at fourth. We held this position to Jardines while Arosa went into first place. From Spanker to Bowring we used our spinnaker to good effect and overtook Boothman A60 to third place behind Bluster and Arosa.

We held this on the windward leg to West Ryde Middle, outside Cowes. From there disaster struck Arosa as they tried to change up to a larger foresail to catch Bluster and they got their halyard stuck leaving them without a foresail. We took our chance and pursued Bluster. I took the helm from John who had been helming from the start and was tiring, and this was enough to allow us to creep forward and overtake Bluster with the line in sight. When Jeff Houlgrave gave us the gun off Cathead there was great jubilation and hugs all round for the Greenhoughs. We had planned to win. Bertram handled the sails, John the helm and I was tactician. Our main error was not using the spinnaker earlier, and but for that we might have had a less anxious time. The race took nearly five hours and covered a large area of the Solent. Later MDL gave us a grand buffet supper and Charles Currey, who was himself racing in a dinghy class gave a speech. MDL Chairman Lord Iliffe gave out prizes.

The following day there was a Parade of Fairey boats, but as the wind had dropped it was a motor past with all sails set and dressed overall.

LIFE BEFORE ATALANTA

Discovered by Ronald Duncan and published with the kind permission of Maurice Griffiths.

Preamble.

Those of you who were at the 1996 dinner will no doubt remember that Ronald Duncan brought with him a copy of Maurice Griffiths' book "Little Ships and Shoal Waters" in which a chapter was devoted to the description of a little ship called "Buttercup".

Correspondence between Ronald and Maurice considered the possibility of the design of Buttercup having influenced Uffa Fox's design of the Atalanta, and indeed, Maurice, in a reply to Ronald, says "Without real evidence, I have always thought Uffa must have based his ideas to a large extent on Robert Clark's clever design of Buttercup".

Perhaps we shall never know, but so that you can form your own opinions, the chapter from "Little Ships and Shoal Waters" is published below, with Maurice Griffiths' permission, for which he is most generously not charging. (*See drawings on centre pages*).

Buttercup, With Bilge Keels A New Version of Shoal Draught

LOA	25 ft.
LWL	22 ft.
Beam	7 ft. 2 in.
Draught	2 ft. 6 in.

Displacement	2.5 tons
Sail area	270 sq. ft.
Thames Tonnage	4½
Designer	Robert Clark
Builders	Rowhedge Ironworks, Essex, England, 1937
Owner	Mr Charles E. Foster, J.P.

When you feel you need a boat that will always sit upright on either hard or soft ground, you have to do something drastic about it; for the conventional yacht will not sit bolt upright on a hard shore, nor even the ordinary centreboard craft with any sort of keel. The barge yacht will, but maybe you don't like the cowlike angularity of a barge or a skipjack.

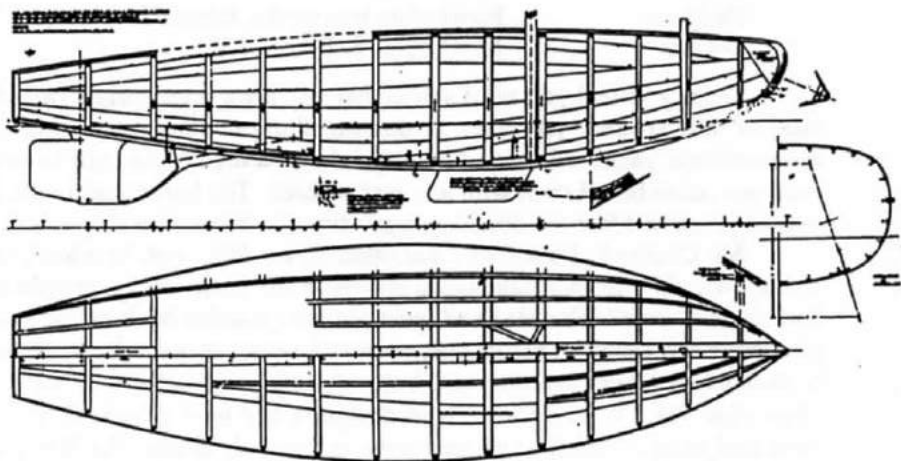
Mr. Charles E. Foster, J.P., had other ideas. Why not, he asked, have a shallow hull with two bilge keels on which the yacht sits as upright as a four-legged table? The idea had been put into practice back in 1928 (and probably a few centuries before that, because I've never met a 'new' idea for boats that hadn't been invented and dropped many years before) by the Hon. (then plain Mr.) R.A. Balfour, who designed and built *Bluebird*, a 25-ft. bilge keel yacht in which he cruised quite extensively around the North and West coasts of Scotland and England. (If you scarcely believe this you will find the boat described in *The Yachting Monthly* for June 1929.)

Wanting not only a little singlehanded cruiser in which he could potter about the Essex creeks and be sure of sitting comfortably vertical when the mud or the sandbanks stopped him, Mr. Foster wanted the boat also to be both uncapsizable and unsinkable. You see, he aimed for mental as well as physical equilibrium when afloat. An idea like that required fostering and Mr. Robert Clark, a London naval architect young enough not to have become hide-bound in his profession, was called in and Mr. Foster's preliminary plans and requirements laid before him.

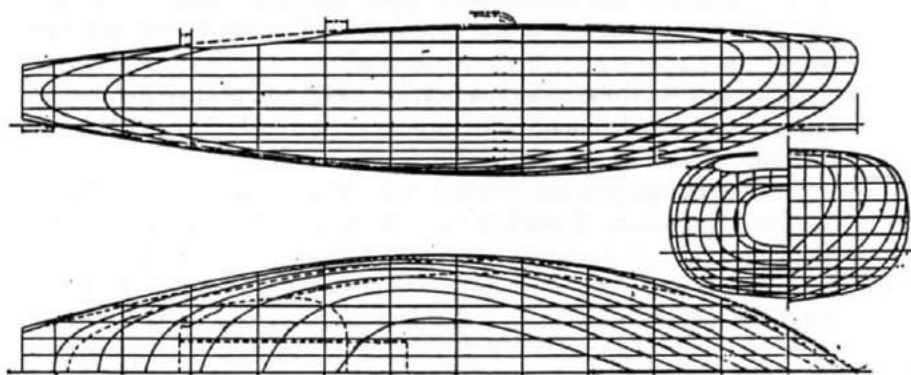
The design you see overleaf was the ultimate result and it is one of the cleverest pieces of work in yacht designing that I know. And what is more, the little boat is entirely successful. She sails very well indeed, feeling and handling just like a normal U-sectioned racer with a bulb-fin keel. But her righting moments are such that, at least on paper, she cannot capsize, and with the ends of her queer hull filled with Onazote, an extremely light buoyancy material made from expanded rubber, she will not sink if she ever filled up. What more could you want?

The hull construction, two layers of mahogany over American elm stringers and light sawn frames, is like that of a dirigible - but of course that was not so that the boat could fly if desired as well.

The two lead bilge keels and the short lead skeg keel aft, together with



The Streamlined lead bilge keels and rudder skeg are shown together with the laminated construction



BUTTERCUP

Believe it or not — she sails very well indeed.

the rudder, are all carefully streamlined. Like the leeboards of the Dutch *hoogaarts* which lie out at an angle, the lee bilge keel of *Buttercup* becomes most effective when she is heeled until it lies vertical in the water.

Below decks the accommodation with 4 ft. headroom is necessarily plain but enough, as the owner says, for an 'old man with simple tastes.'

The auxiliary engine is composed of a 4 h.p. Britannia outboard motor power head installed below the cockpit floor, which drives a reversible Stuart Turner propellor through a bevel gear and orthodox central shaft, giving the ship a speed of about 4 knots.

And the name? Gilbert & Sullivan gave us H.M.S. *Pinafore* aboard which ship 'everything was done the wrong way round.' That appeared ideal, but another yacht already bore the name. Still, there was a young lady in the same opera who had a way with the tars, and she bore an equally good one:

They call me their Buttercup
Dear little Buttercup
Though I could never tell why...

Nice as the name is I cannot help suggesting that an even more appropriate one, since this boat is a 'Foster-Clark's' production, would have been *Mock Turtle*!

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Peter Martin's article "Filling the Gaps", which follows this note, has never been published in the Bulletin before, and I have included it here because it is almost ten years since that cruise took place, and I thought it might perhaps bring back memories of that time, or just stand as a reminder of sailing in less crowded days.

FILLING THE GAPS (1987)

By Peter Martin - Seamajor (A92)

Keen students of Seamajor's history will have realised that by now she has covered perhaps 50% of the coast of the UK, Eire and adjacent parts of northern France, Holland and Belgium. Covering a coast means visiting the majority of its ports and going on most of its navigable rivers. Much remains to be visited, hence "Filling the Gaps".

The chosen gap for 1987 was that between the Medway(1976) and Folkestone (1974 and 1978). As it turned out, it also proved possible to fill in a minor but very interesting gap, the Thames from Woolwich to Tower Bridge. Accordingly Lawrence Biddle (formerly A39) was approached and

he very kindly arranged a launching spot at Upnor. Here the cruise began on July 27th.

The following day, like many to follow, was windless, so we toured by car, returning to Seamajor in the evening, ready for an 0630 start the next day. We reached Queenborough before the rain and thunderstorm started and spent the rest of the day reading and doing odd jobs around the boat. We had visited Queenborough eleven years before and found it just as pleasant this time.

Next day we made a brief trip across the Thames to Leigh and Southend, both having been missed on our last holiday. We found Leigh much the better shopping place which surprised me as I had expected a better-known resort to have the better shops. Back to Queenborough to wait for the tide and then filling in another gap, we sailed along the Swale to Harty Ferry and Ramsgate in two easy stages. The sail from Harty Ferry to Ramsgate was memorable because we had a good fast sail with favourable tide all the way.

Our bicycles came out for the first time on this trip and we cycled to Margate and Broadstairs in the afternoon.

Our trip to Dover and back to Ramsgate was accomplished in one day. We only stayed in Dover for the tide to turn, and in view of the light wind, it was just as well. We have no radio telephone on board so we had to enter without asking permission and no sooner were we within the harbour than the harbour patrol vessel rushed over. Having discovered that we have no motor - well only a Seagull Century - they escorted us to a mooring buoy. As soon as we hoisted sail for the return trip, they appeared again and once again escorted us across the harbour. Then came the day's excitement. "Sorry sir, we'll have to tow you out, you aren't going fast enough". (There was a ferry coming in). So we gave them a rope and then Seamajor achieved a speed through the water which she has never attained before, as they towed us through the entrance. We waited in fearful anticipation for the front cleat to be ripped out of the foredeck, but in the end it was the towrope which broke with a final twang; fortunately we were outside the harbour, so collecting the other half of the rope, we waved goodbye. We sailed back to Ramsgate and rafted up once more. Another gap in our coastal areas had been filled and a week of our holiday had gone.

Another calm day, so out came our Bickerton bikes again and we visited Sandwich and Deal. Next day we intended to return to Harty Ferry, having found this a very pleasant, quiet mooring on our previous visit, but wind and tide decided against this. It was the sort of day when we had the genoa, the normal jib, the main and the spinnaker all up in various combinations. At times we barely moved and then had to reef the main and had a job to douse the spinnaker in a force five! Eventually we drifted gently into Whitstable and just had enough way to turn Seamajor round and moor

alongside a monstrous dredger - it was quite a climb up its side! The following morning there was another very light breeze and it took us four hours to cover six miles! Unfortunately it was blowing straight into the harbour, so that we had no option but to put on the Seagull motor to get us all of two hundred yards. As usual, we only just had time to get the sails up before the bouncing outside the harbour caused the Seagull to stop. However, we managed to sail to Harty Ferry where we spent two nights. The intervening day, again windless, was spent cycling to Canterbury and back, via Oare and Faversham. We found Canterbury a very interesting city and enjoyed revisiting the cathedral. Back on Seamajor we were visited by David Norfolk (A 133 Ann Gray) with some of his family and friends. We spent a very pleasant evening sitting on Seamajor exchanging ideas and having a drink.

Across the Thames once more to Harwich, nine and a half hours for 44 miles. This was another day when we used five sails in various combinations. We picked up a buoy opposite "Low Light" and spent a very bouncy night there.

We paid a return visit to Walton Backwaters which was more packed with moorings than I remember from eleven years ago. Tacking out the following morning was a foretaste of the sailing for the next few days as rivers become more choked with moorings and fairways more difficult to see. Every one else gave up and motored out. We spent the night at anchor outside Woodbridge Haven as there was not enough wind, tide or daylight to cross the bar at the mouth of the Deben. The second week of our holiday had ended.

On the Monday morning when the fog cleared we tacked in to Felixstowe Ferry against a force two, but with the tide going with us, we fairly whistled in. We picked up a buoy and went to Felixstowe by bike. This didn't delay us long and back on Seamajor we witnessed what could have been a very nasty incident. A family with a recently acquired cruiser motored in and, after picking up a buoy quite close to the shore, rowed ashore in a Tinker inflatable dinghy. A couple of hours later, after the tide had turned, they came to row back. Meanwhile their boat had been moved by a fisherman, whose buoy they had picked up, and put a long way uptide and further offshore. Father started to row straight out from the shore, so Mother indicated the direction of the boat; father continued until he was clear of the moored boats and then turned up into the tide.....

Anyone who knows the tide there will know the rest of the story. Before they could do anything they were swept towards the sea. By ferry gliding they nearly reached the other bank but for some reason changed their minds and came back into the tide. A large motor boat coming in passed them, realised what had happened and went back to help them. An intervening bank stopped us from seeing what happened, but something must have gone wrong,

as five minutes later another attempt was made and the motor boat reappeared towing the Tinker and took them up to their cruiser. They had two young children with them and it must have been very frightening for them all. Suppose the motor boat had not come in....? No one on shore seemed even to have noticed.

After a visit to Woodbridge on the tide and another night at Felixstowe Ferry, we were ready to visit the Alde. On our departure from the Deben, we saw a yacht stranded on her side on the bar - one who didn't get the depth right and had no folding keels! We arrived off the Alde intending to anchor and wait for the tide to turn but seeing someone sail in ahead the skipper said "if he can, we can", so we followed. We found the leading marks useless and after touching one keel, we realised what a good sailor our predecessor was. The worst hazard was Seaminor (our dinghy) which we were towing, which kept overtaking us and crashing into the Seagull motor in the confused water over the bar. We sailed up to Aldeburgh through dozens of sailing craft -we hadn't realised that it was their regatta week! Seeing another Atalanta, we dropped anchor close by and the skipper rowed over to see D May on Amsara (A136). Our position was ideal for watching the start of the afternoon races as we were very close to the starting line. It was most entertaining to see (and hear!) a start from the side line, as it were. With the turn of the tide we were drifting towards the aforementioned line, so we unanchored and sailed up river, finding a lovely quiet buoy with only the birds for company.

One of the reasons for revisiting the Alde was to get to Minsmere, so next morning despite the rain, we cycled to the RSPB reserve and spent five hours shower-dodging in the various hides of the famous reserve. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and agreed that the rain had its advantages as only the keenest birdwatchers were out, so that the hides were not too crowded.

From Aldeburgh we sailed to Wolverstone marina. On the way up the Orwell we were having a port and starboard tussle with a big ketch, when he dropped a cushion overboard, and we were able to rescue it for him. Once at the marina we assembled our bikes and visited Ipswich. On our return the tide had turned and was rushing through the marina piles, so we picked up a buoy near Pin Mill for a quieter night.

Our next port was Brightlingsea, another of our previous gaps. I did not like Brightlingsea at all, probably because it is extremely difficult to sail into and out of! There is no room to turn an Atalanta between the moored boats, so one had no chance to stem the tide. In the end we had to do our famous running stop against a large boat. We spent the next morning going to church and then cycling to St. Osyth's Abbey, church and gatehouse, all very interesting. We left just after low water in the afternoon, so it was inevitable that we should go aground as we tried to tack out. No sooner had we got off

one side of the channel than we went aground on the other! Thank goodness for an Atalanta. We had a gentle sail to West Mersea but here again there is little room to manoeuvre under sail between the buoys.

We began our third week's holiday as we had the first, with another windless day. A cycle ride into Colchester occupied the morning then we paid a visit to the Commodore and Mrs. Odling for a chat. We got back to Seamajor just as the rain started.

Next day we went birdwatching at Old Hall Marshes in Seaminor before breakfast, and then we went on to the Essex Naturalist Trust Reserve at Fingringhoe Wick by bike. This time we were lucky with the weather and it was beautifully sunny. Back on Seamajor we took ashore another yachtsman whose new dinghy had been stolen the previous night while he was making a 'phone call, despite having no oars in it. This served to make us doubly careful where we left our dinghy. We took the late afternoon tide up the Blackwater to a mooring off Stansgate Abbey. Another day of cycling followed, this time to Maldon and Chelmsford, both disappointing as tourist attractions. My view may be coloured by the fact that on our way into Chelmsford a maniac all but knocked the skipper off his bike by overtaking him on his inside at a roundabout at fifty miles an hour. It is far safer at sea than on main roads on a bike!

Back across the Thames to Queenborough again, a day's sail which took us twelve hours to cover 39 miles. As usual the wind headed us and we completed the crossing in the dark. I had never realised how difficult it is to see a mooring buoy in the dark when you are tacking; you can't see the buoy until you are too close to come head to wind, or down tide etc., so we ended up by anchoring and moving to a buoy the following morning. I spent the morning recovering from too much sun on my face - in Britain, I would never have believed it, if it hadn't happened to me! Then we cycled to Sittingbourne, a good shopping centre, then to Minster to see the Abbey and back to Seamajor, once more arriving back just before the thunderstorms started.

Our next target was Gillingham and, with a very light wind we only just arrived with the last of the tide. From a mooring off the Medway Cruising Club we cycled into Gillingham and Chatham and then took the tide back to Queenborough. Here we found that everyone visits at the weekend and we took one of the three vacant moorings - those furthest from the slipway, of course. During the evening another was occupied and the third was very shallow indeed, so Queenborough might have been said to be full! On our way in we were in danger of being rammed by a speedboat with so many people draped over it that I doubt if the driver even saw us until we shouted. (We were tacking up the narrow channel and he was coming down the middle and there was nothing we could do about it). Fortunately he stopped his engine,

but one of those travelling at speed would certainly make a nasty mess of an Atalanta.

The skipper has long wanted to take A92 up to Tower Bridge, so with just under a week of our holiday left we set sail, aiming to go as far as one tide would allow. This turned out to be Erith, where we discovered that the moorings are in an incredible piece of water where the tide always runs hard and is always an ebb!. (Unless of course this was because of all the thunderstorms and extra water in the Thames causing an unusually strong ebb). Here we met the Twyford family on A95; we went on board for a drink and a chat, then after they had had their sail they came to see us, and over a cup of tea, all sorts of helpful hints were exchanged.

The great day dawned and, in spite of a light and variable wind, on August 24th, we reached Tower Bridge with one hour of tide to spare. We tied up to one of the buoys outside the marina and took our 'photos despite the grey sky and, after a meal, took the tide down river again. I was most impressed by the new buildings along the waterfront of Dockland, most attractively designed, yet fitting into their surroundings. The Thames flood barrier was much less obtrusive than I had thought it would be from photographs and again we were busy with our cameras. Soon afterwards the heavens opened and the rain came down in sheets. We went through the usual business of changing sails and reefing and were glad to reach Erith in a slight lull. Here we picked up another excellent yacht club mooring for what turned out to be twenty four hours of gale and rain.

After the storm had passed we sailed down to Gravesend, an interesting and lively town, which we visited before returning to Queenborough for the night, in a strong following wind.

Our last sail of the season (Queenborough to Upnor) turned out to be probably the most exciting! We took a reef in the main and waited until we were on the outward pointing tack before sheeting in and letting go of the buoy. As always, I steered while the skipper hauled in the jib sheets. The tacks in the Queenborough creek were so short that the skipper felt that he never stopped winching in for the twenty minutes it took us to reach the Spit buoy. We got it right and didn't touch bottom once - it would have been risky to do so in a force six. A coaster encountered us at one stage and kindly held up while we tacked and then accelerated to pass us before the next tack brought us back. Who says power doesn't give way to sail? As we freed off at the Spit buoy to reach up the Medway, we felt very pleased for the hundredth time about an Atalanta's ability to go about smartly and to gain ground to windward even in a force six.

Once again the excellent weather of the south east coast was enjoyed by the visitors from the wet and windy land of Wales. Admittedly the last few days

were an exception to this, but for the first four weeks we had no gales and almost all the rain fell at night. In essence we repeated our 1976 cruise but eleven years gives plenty of time to forget the delights of the East Coast Rivers - their good tides and weather and the deep black mud, not to mention the shingle keel-scraping bars of the Deben and Oare. This time we had no family with us and so were able to satisfy our interests of birdwatching and prowling round secondhand bookshops. By the end of a cruise, Seamajor is ballasted with probably one hundred kilos of books!

The statistics for the cruise are:- 439 miles under sail, under motor 200 yards (the length of Whitstable Harbour) and on bikes 217 miles.

THE LOG OF THE GOOD SHIP BLUE BELLE (F54)

Skipper - John Searle

Crew - Mike Roberts (Narrator;)

Aggregate age of boat, skipper and crew - about 150 years

Left Islip (pronounced Icelip, the relics of a Saxon name) 0805 Thursday 15 August, by train. Beeching did for the station at Islip, but we fought for it and got it back about 20 years later. Arrived Brightlingsea 1230. Train all the way except taxi from Colchester. Environmentally sound journey. Placards still adorning the walls and doors remembering the cattle campaign. Pint and chicken and chips in the waterfront pub.

Waited for John Searle till 1415 but couldn't remember whether we arranged to meet on Blue Belle or on shore. Memory pretty foggy these days.

Eventually located boatman running private ferry service. Out to Blue Belle for £1. Left message with ferryman to let me know when John had arrived. Tidied up on board. About 1515 signal from said ferryman that John was pacing the foreshore. At this time weather bright, wind light SE force 3. High tide 1350. Went ashore. Unloaded John's car, collected dinghy from its rack, loaded it up and lugged it down to the end of the pontoon and slid it onto the water. Away under Seagull power. Stowed all gear and set off to contact Marshall and Margaret Jenkins on Gambol. Found them all orange and blue and shining new. Made tentative arrangements for setting off together for Mersea tomorrow. Overcome by hunger and thirst (mostly the latter) so retired to pub for refreshments. Bed 2300 after whisky. Sleepless night.

Friday 16 August

Up at 0800. Dead low tide, Blue Belle hard aground. Waited till tide lifted boat off mud. Went ashore to Colne Club to make use of the plumbing and after much palaver looking for a stretch of water wide enough in which to turn (we were facing the wrong way) set sail for Mersea at 1230. Jenkins

already away. Wind SE 3-4. Arrived Mersea and tied up on piles 1515 hrs. Met up with Stearns (Bluster A183) - Ted, Jane and nephew Hugh. Invited aboard Gambol (Emma Duck A179 - Mitchell, alongside). Marshall and Margaret produced a bottle of Glenfiddich for tea. Yes - Tea. What a good idea. John and I were lowered with care into our dinghy for safe return to Blue Belle. Also nearby, Colin and Janet Twyford (A95 Hiran) and Kookaburra (Dorrington A168). Looks like a good line up for tomorrow.

Saturday 17 August

Woke 0530. Got up 0730. Listened to news, weather forecast. Hot and sunny inland, 26-28°. Sea breezes on coasts will bring temperatures down to 21-22°, some mist and fog. Dead flat calm here. Skipper still asleep. Obviously not well. Considered situation and decided against racing. Fulmar challenge aborted for second time. Last year we got the mooring lines tangled up round the keel and missed the start. Third time lucky, maybe. Race due to start 10.10. Wind speeds as recorded on the foredeck of Blue Belle:

1030 1-2 Southerly

1045 2-3 Southerly

1145 3-4 SE

by 1545 4+ SE (Recorded with hand held meter.)

Dave Allen came alongside in an Anderson 22 (Roamara A66 still under repair). Then there was the rest of the day.

Lines written whilst dozing on the foredeck of Blue Belle at Mersea.

Nothing to do for once

no telephone

no sound

but the lapping of the water round
the hull.

Rockabye

Lullaby

the wind South Easterly

two or three.

There is a family

in a cabin cruiser called Katrina

nearby they have a huge

Suzuki outboard

and a dinghy with a Yamaha

they are happy it seems just cleaning

scrubbing and polishing

they don't go anywhere the children

just potter about

in and out.
Mum has a hand
held radio telephone they
keep in touch with dry land.
A Laser leans by,
grace in being,
and a boy in a dinghy
he's perched in the bow
the outboard motor on full throttle.
When he goes aft to throttle down the boat
stands up on its tail
like Ikan Parang*
The river so broad here
narrows to a flat and misty horizon.
Boats moored between the piles
or swinging to orange buoys
dwindle into dots and triangles
in the faraway haze.
And the family
in the cruiser with the Suzuki
went off quietly
in the end.

*A fish found in Malaysian waters which, when frightened, leaps from the water and spins along on its tail.

Atalantas begin to return from the race.
First back on mooring Emma Duck A179 (Mitchell) at 1545
Followed by Hiran A95 (Twyford) at 1552
Then A183 (Stearn) at 1555
Gambol A17 (Jenkins) at 1600.

Learned that the race did not start till 1230 due to lack of wind. My readings above must have been a bit out. Also learned that the race was won by Modestine A48 (Mike Lewis). Bravo!
Skipper recovered, and at 1810 set off for shore in Blue Belle's rubber dinghy towed by Colin Twyford. Eventual destination Gun House by minibus. Picked up fish and chips on the way. Thanks to the Odlings a very well organised and hilarious party in their stately barn. Intended return to Blue Belle to watch fireworks from boat, but only got as far as the jetty jammed solid with dinghies. Showered with multicoloured sparks. Exceedingly hard row back to Blue Belle against foul tide.

Tea, whisky, then bed.

Sunday 18 August

Skipper OK. Up and about 0730. Welcomed Derek Buckton on board. He crewed for Colin in Hiran and was now on his way back to Yorkshire. He intends to buy Taka Maru (*he has - ed.*) All ashore, Derek to return home, John and I to make use of the Club's plumbing (public facilities filthy, and Blue Belle only provides bucket and chuck it). Tried to row back to Blue Belle against the tide but couldn't make it. Luckily got a tow. Coffee with the Jenkins on Gambol.

Cast off moorings at 1215, motoring (the old Stuart Turner never failed us). At the Nass about 1225. Set sail heading up coast close inshore. Wind SE3. Ghost of the Mollette hangs around this area. Ran aground. Up keel and away. Immortal cry from foredeck "thank God for Atalantas". And Fulmars too. Wind now 4 gusting 5. Great sailing. On mooring Brightlingsea 1600. Packed up. Rowed everything ashore by 1730. Taxi for me to Colchester. John off home by car. I by train. Arrived home Islip 2150.

Summary. Time and energy spent humping gear, including rubber dinghies then blowing up and rowing them, etc. - a lot. Sailing - about 8 hours. Motoring - about 30 minutes. Going aground - about one minute (due to lightning action by skipper winding up keel). Enjoying good company - all the time. Thanking God for Atalantas, ditto. Conclusion. At our age we could have done without the humping. The rest was a pleasure, thanks to John Searle who took on the organisation at short notice.

AN ALTERNATIVE RUDDER FOR COLCHIDE (A 89)

By Bernard Upton

See diagrams and photographs on centre pages.

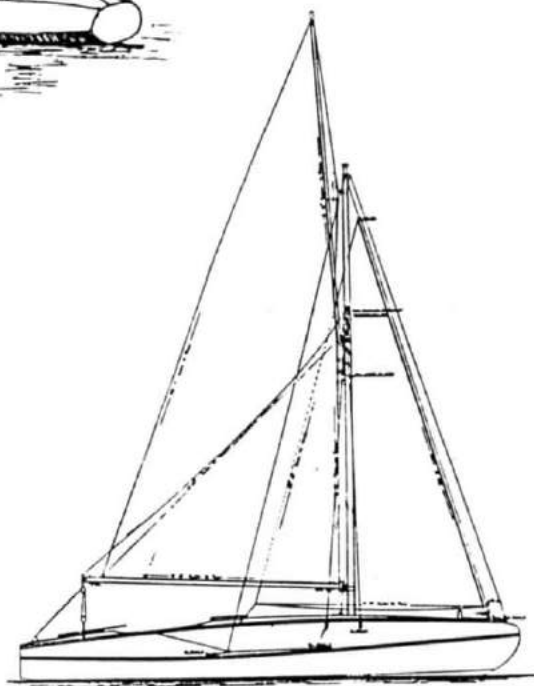
Measures in millimetres. Rudder stock in stainless steel 316, or mild steel galvanised. The pieces are pre-cut and welded, spotting first and continuous to finish. Thick black lines in the drawings are the welds. The weight is 8 kgs stock, 12 kgs wood rudder, total 20 kgs. Fairey original is 30 kgs. No alterations to transom, skeg, top and bottom pintles, or steering wires. Cushion plates 1/2 mm duraluminium, plastozote 5 mm, BX plastics.

- 1) SS tube
- 2) Top Nylon bush, flush with top of tube; tight fit, gap at top 3/4 mm.
- 3) Lower bush, the bearing area 5 mm thick extends outside tube diameter, hole for retaining screw.
- 4) Nylon bearing ring for lower bush 10-11 mm thick, also determines that tiller arm is clear of up/down rollers.
- 5) "U" channel same length as tube to which it is welded down centre lines.



**"Buttercup" from a
photograph in "Little
Ships and Shoal Waters"
(see article "Life Before
Atalanta")**

"The Sailing Sausage"



HAMBLE



Sitting on port side - David Cooper
Starboard side - Simon Cooper (AROSA)



Bobbie Currey at the helm coming back from the parade of sail
The paddler is Derek Woods. They paddled most of the way in their
Fairey Falcon (photos: M Roberts)

HAMBLE



**left to right: Mike Tufnell, Managing Director of MDL, Colin Twyford,
Lynda Jones, Jessica Houlgrave and Jeff Houlgrave**
(Photos: M Roberts)



AQUILO 2 - now owned by Marine Developments Ltd. Hamble.
(Photo: M Roberts)

MERSEA

BLUSTER (A 183 - Stearn)
Sailing out of Hamble



A 60 ACHATES
(Boothman) - sailing in

MERSEA



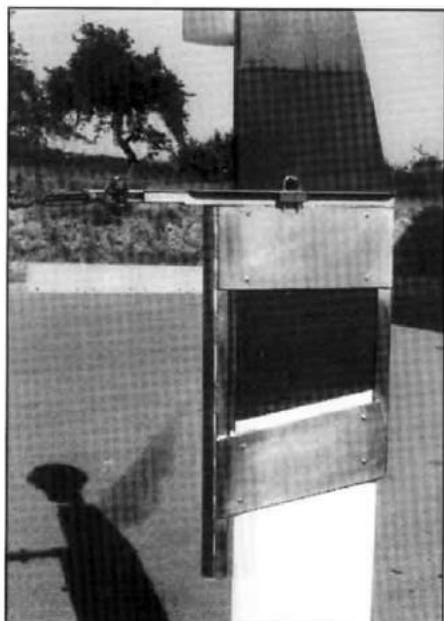
Above:
Marshall Jenkins
dispensing the Glenfiddich
on GAMBOL
- see "The Log of the
Good Ship Blue Belle"

Left:
Martin Mitchell and
Graham Tricker
alongside GAMBOL
in EMMA DUCK

(photos: M Roberts)



See "An Alternative Rudder for Colchide" (*photos: Upton*)



MERSEA



**John Searle holding on to HIRAN (Colin Twyford)
from BLUE BELLE**



**John Searle and Derek Buckton, no doubt discussing
the sale of TAKA MARU, on BLUE BELLE**

Tea, whisky, then bed.

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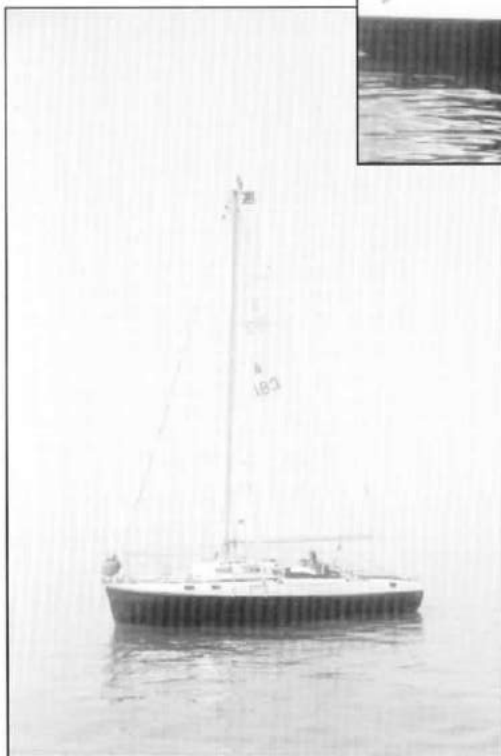
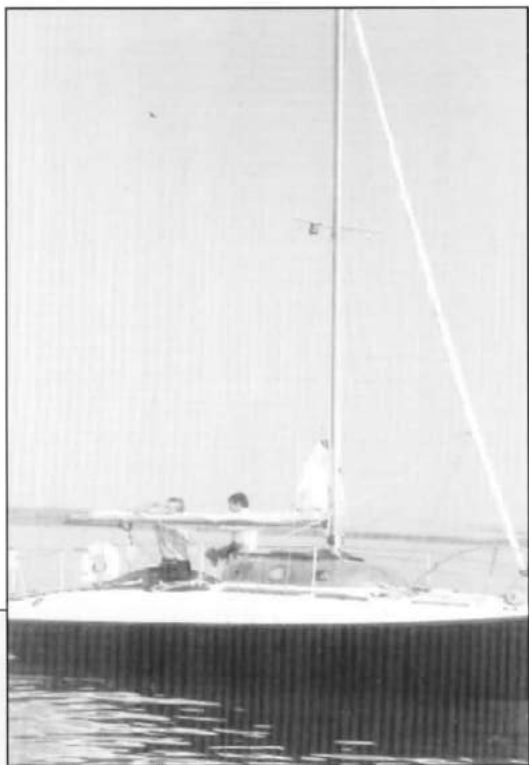
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MERSEA

EMMA DUCK
(Mitchell) waiting for
the wind at the delayed
start of the Mersea
race.

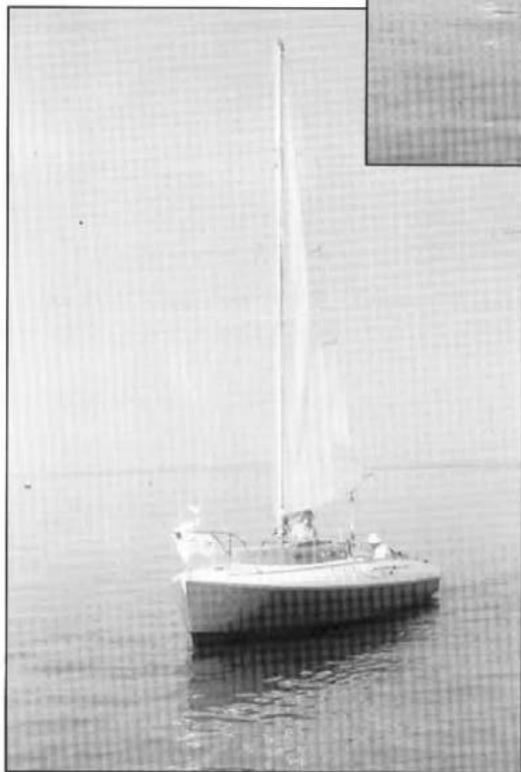
(Photo: M Jenkins)



BLUSTER (Stearn)
also becalmed. The race
was put off until 12.30
for lack of wind.

(Photo: M Mitchell)

**Windless and waiting
for the start of the race.
HIRAN (Twyford) and
GAMBOL (Jenkins)
together.**



**A closer look at
GAMBOL. What you
don't see is the colour
scheme. Orange cabin
top, blue hull.**

(Photo: M Mitchell)

MERSEA



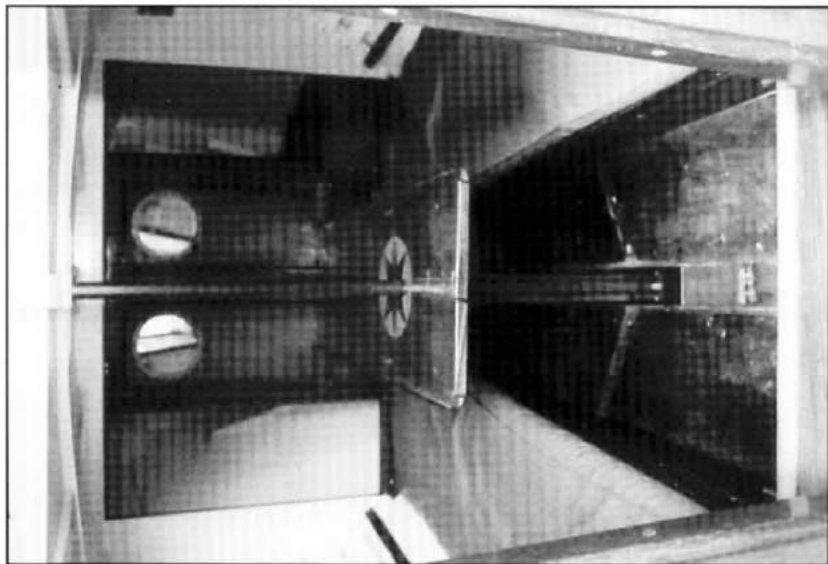
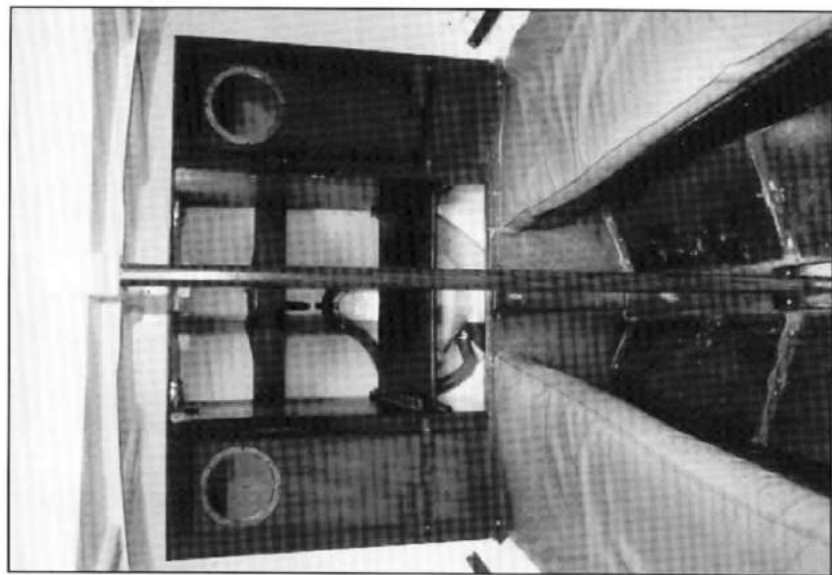
Left:
A wave from **BLUSTER** on
her way home from the
West Mersea Regatta.

(Photo: M Mitchell)

Below:
A 168 **KOOKABURRA**
(Dorrington) sailing away
after the Regatta.

(Photo: M Mitchell)





See article "Table Talk" (Photos: Graham Wintringham)