



**ATALANTA
OWNERS'
ASSOCIATION
2001-2002
BULLETIN**



ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION 2001 BULLETIN

ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

2001 – 2002 BULLETIN

43rd Edition

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Illustrations

Front cover – “Solvendo” and the fleet at their moorings at West Mersea. Photos by Louise Lawton

Back Cover – “Kookaburra” at West Mersea. Photo by Terry Ward

Inside back cover – a new rudder for “Gellie”

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From the Commodore

It is the customary practice in a Commodore's address to hope that all members have enjoyed a good sailing season, and on your behalf anticipate that an even better one is on its way for 2002.

In this regard I have a particular New Year's resolution to make and that is to stop putting so much faith in weather forecasts, especially the ones abundantly found on computer web sites. A tendency to select the most favourable one from the bunch as a true indicator of the weather for the week-end ahead led to several disappointments. So much for "favourites".

At this time of the year I always look forward to hearing what owners have been getting up to with their boats both in and out of the water. For me the Bulletin is a particularly enjoyable source of reported incidents, travel logs, rallies, races and ingenious ways of effecting repairs or installing design "improvements". I hope that the very attractive trophies that the Association awards each year will continue to encourage members to submit their reports for the rest of us to marvel, at smile at, and occasionally shudder at. Last year I found myself picking up a mooring alongside an Atalanta that in the repair yard I had concluded was probably beyond recovery. It cruised around it mooring chain in open defiance, but it does show that with the right approach the vessels that comprise the "Fairey Fleet" can be sailed on for many years to come.

Fred Boothman

Editorial

It seems the new format of last year's bulletin received mixed review, though Colin assures me that there were more ayes than nos. The one piece of feedback that was mildly critical concerned the lack of technical and practical articles. Well, I have to say that your humble editor is not a magician and he can only work with what he gets. So I'm delighted to bring you a wide variety of contributions courtesy of you, the members in this year's bulletin.

The content of the bulletin is entirely driven by you. Please keep sending in your articles, sketches, drawings or whatever. It's unlikely that I'll wield the knife!

Very best wishes for 2002. Here's to a good season.

Mike Dixon

The South Coast Rally and Race

Jonathon Reynolds

("Achates" A60)

Sunday 8th July 2001

**A119 "Walrus"
A165 "Sloebery"
A60 "Achates"**

"Walrus", "Sloebery" and "Achates" mustered off East Head for a renewal of the South Coast race, whipped in by a committee boat in the form of a very smart Fairey motor launch, containing a contingent of the Currey family, the Hon Secretary and the ex Commander of "Achates", David Pullinger. David was transferred to "Walrus" to assist her up-until-this-point single-handed skipper.

With the sun shining, the tide flooding through the harbour entrance and a good breeze filling in from the west, the ten-minute bugle sounded and pulses quickened aboard "Achates". Racing her was a new experience for her new keepers who were keen to maintain her reputedly unblemished record for crossing the line first against other Atalantas.

"Sloebery" got off to a flyer with "Achates" not too far distant, but where was "Walrus"?

Somehow the experienced campaigners Hammond and Pullinger had been caught napping and were still changing a headsail. As "Sloebery" and "Achates" tacked to lay the windward mark, "Walrus" was only just crossing the start line!

"Achates" rounded the windward mark first, with "Sloebery" just a few boat lengths second. Keels were wound up and headsails goose-winged on a dead run almost all the way to the finish line off Lighter's Field. "Achates" stride appeared to lengthen until a novicey course around the inside of the bend into the Itchenor Reach allowed an amazingly recovered "Walrus" (taking the more experienced, faster outside line) to close and cross the line in second, with "Sloebery" third.

It was considered that the corrected time was too close to call without precise calculation on the day, so no results were given. It was later confirmed that placings on the water stood, though it was a close run result.

We were then welcomed ashore by Charles Currey aboard his tractor mower with flags fluttering and a gaggle of grandchildren clinging to any available standing space.

Once again we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Currey's for their hospitality and delicious barbeque, as well as the use of one of their moorings and storage for an almost forgotten bicycle.



Brightlingsea "Belle" wins 2001 West Mersea Cup

This is "Blue Belle's" own parody And appreciation

Saturday 11th August 2001 saw the Atlanta Cup challenge under-way in superb summer sunshine. 6 Atalanta's, me - "Blue Belle" - a Fulmer, and my Auntie "Gellie" - a Titania, all the way from Scotland me dears. A brisk SW wind was blowing down the River Blackwater together with the last of the ebb tide. I heard my crew getting all technical about, "it's going to be a Westerly start this year" and so it was. How vocal men can be when trying to make a decision, not like us girls ah! "Lets try out the NOLM end of the start line, tide will be running less there". Then we're off sailing across towards the Bradwell shore at a rate of knots.

"Look out! Have you seen that cruiser"? "He's on port tack, OK". Jane Stern (Bluster) and the Dorrington's (Kookaburra) are over here, so it must be that port tack across the line has advantage. "Lets try out the SOLM end of the start line, suppose that means Southerly Outer Limit Mark", "But I don't see it in the course instructions". "Hang on, it shows SOLM south of the Nass Beacon on the chartlet, and instruction 7 of the SI's say's, No boat shall sail between OLM and NOLM except when starting or finishing a race". "Have they flown the class flag yet? It's gone 0945 hours". "What is the class flag"? "How the hell do I know - I haven't read the instructions, they sent them to you". Men for you.

Flag G (Golf) was up and course number 9 displayed on the committee boat. But they, my crewmen had forgotten to bring binoculars. "We'll sail close down the start line and try and see what

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flag and course it is". The Master Mariner from "Gellie" is hailed. "What flag is it"? "G, course 9 I think", came the reply. Uncle Michael, such a gentleman "Bugger! That was the gun, and the flags are down". John & Lorraine Searle (Touch) were over the line on the other tack and steaming along. I was now on port tack and heading for the first race mark (Buoy 3). Other boats were getting away from us, so about I went, charging across towards the Bradwell Power Station jetty wall. Well clear of the line by now, and out of reach of the other boats. I went about and had a swifter, easier sail up to Buoy 3. "Solvendo", "Lidia", "Gellie" and "Kookuburra" had well gone around by the time I had. "Come on boys, get me moving won't you". Sailing on a reach across the River Blackwater, I was wondering, would the helm make due allowance for the easterly going ebb tide? He did. What followed was committee by camel. "When shall we get the cruising shoot up"? "Hang on - "Bluster" is creaming down behind us". She gets on the course line to number 5 Buoy and my mannerly learning helm gives way to a lady-helm, easing off the course line to let "Bluster" get to the buoy before us. Once round and freed off, the crew had my tutu flying. Oh boys! This is sailing - I started to catch up the other boats; increasing the gap between those behind. "Gellie" was ploughing two furrows in the putty ahead of me going down the first run on the Bradwell shore. I was really, really enjoying my self. A word of warning to you boys. When you race me, try getting my tutu out of the snuffler before hoisting, it will go up much faster and easier. (I can get techy too) "We love you too Blue Belle", I heard them mutter under their breaths.

The run down to number 2 buoy was nearly over and I was getting anxious. "How will the crew get my tutu demurely down", "don't rip it boys". "Ah! Don't get your knickers in a twist old girl". "Not so much of the old if you please". I gybed most graciously, going portside around number 2 and was quickly on course for number 1 buoy over on the Mersea Island shore side; being on a near reach I was going like a blue belle girl, dancing over the now gathering waves. Mixed up amongst the PY Rated Cruisers, racing for the Gowen Plate. They also started at the same time as the Atalanta Class. Rounding the buoy, (all buoy's had to be left to port on the race) I did a delightful semi pirouette; the crew commenced hardening in the new main sail, which, though I say it my self, was setting perfectly. The crew concentrating on what would be the best tacking strategy to get back up to number 3 buoy. The tide would be nearing slack water and picking up the early flood; best placed in deeper water sooner. Yet the wind does seem to blow harder on the Island shore side. By now the force SW4 had gotten up to SW5, especially in the gusts.

The continuing race would now be a repeat of the earlier course headings. Instead of rounding number 1 Buoy, the boats having rounded number 2 for the second time, would set course for MG (Middle Ground) buoy positioned east of the Nass Beacon, then on to the finish. Being the extrovert that I am; could not wait to toot my tutu yet again on the running leg between buoy's 5 and 2. This time the boy's had hold of me and I intended to strut my stuff. Oh! My lovely new sails. If you've got it, flaunt it.

Tom & Louise Lawton (Emma Duck - first year sailing her) had an enjoyable first West Mersea experience, although last over the line, I saw Duckie sailing very well. At one stage she nearly caught me up and again at the finish was hard on my heels. But then, I am a hard act, and you're meant to follow, Duckie.

Sadly, at some point in the race, "Touch" on starboard tack found her self in a *bête noire* (that's what happens to les girls) with another boat on port tack; ripping away her pulpit, consequently she retired from the race.

"Gellie" faced a near mutiny when one member of her crew was quite put out when the Old Master Mariner refused to hide her ensign. She "couldn't possibly race whilst flying an ensign". Well darlings, it is a girl's prerogative, and she is a registered British vessel, so spherical objects to you. Why her skipper undressed her at the finishing line (took her sails down) is another story all together. Then that's men for you.

In the evening all the girls had a well-earned rest. Moored along-side each other in groups, we enjoyed the grand fireworks display, so traditional and renowned at West Mersea. Each year it seems to get better, more so than the last. The Oh's and the Ah's enjoyed by all.

On behalf of the girls and our crews, I have been asked to give a vote of thanks to John Searle for organising the rally, Margaret Odling and the ladies whom, each year, go to make up her shore party; organising and preparing the supper at Gun House. Especially to Margaret Jenkins; who having succumbed to shore duties, so graciously supported and helped. Bless you darlings. Secondly, my apologies to the crew of "Solvendo" who were unable to attend the supper due to transportation vagaries. Men for you, you can't leave them alone to do anything. Quite frankly, with out us girls you would all be *de rigueur*!

The pen-ultimate, "what do you call a group of Harbourmasters? When I sailed into Brightlingsea on the Sunday Afternoon with a lady helm, (I would have you know) a group of Harbourmasters

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hailed me, "Congratulations", they shouted. How did they know?

The answer must be a Boatu-cry-acy!

Finally, with gale warnings forecast for Sunday/Monday, "Gellie", "Pandemonium" (an Anderson 22 who always seems to be around at race time) and "Emma Duck" stayed an extra night on the Sunday, when, I am reliably informed, a shipboard dinner took place aboard "Gellie". The dinner designed, prepared and cooked by an

architect, whilst the crewmembers scuppered starters and sweets provided by the galley of "Emma Duck". The evening completed with good old Scottish hospitality, when those present, started and finished a bottle of malt whisky.

Well done everyone for making 2001 such a memorable occasion. Lets see what we can conjure up for 2002.

Love you all - Blue Belle.

Boat	Sail No	TCC	Elapsed Time	Corrected time	Position
Solvendo	A108	0.705	2.24.01	101.53	2nd
Lidia	A48	0.705	2.34.53	109.19	3rd
Bluster	A183	0.7244	2.40.20	116.15	6th
Kookaburra	A168	0.6856	2.41.18	110.59	4th
Blue Belle	F54	0.5966	2.45.24	098.68	1st
Emma Duck	A179	0.6856	2.49.10	115.98	5th
Touch	A171	0.6856			Retired
Gellie	T4	0.6788			DNS
Hiran	A95	0.705			DNS



A new rudder for "Gellie"

Mike Dixon

I renewed "Gellie's" rudder blade six years ago. I consulted Mike Rowe and procured the correct grade of aluminium. It wasn't cheap (but nothing for boats ever is!) and it took a fair bit of time and effort to shape the new blade. It has proved successful but was becoming quite pitted where the coating had become abraded.

I decided to research alternatives. Several members have designed and built different arrangements. CW Bishop's design for "Melanien" (1987/88 Bulletin) and Bernard Upton's design for "Colchide" (1996/97 Bulletin) provided much inspiration, as did David Walworth's article on twin rudders.

Required features of my design were –

- 1 Immersed blade area no less than existing,
- 2 Blade had to be capable of being lifted ("Gellie" lies on a drying mooring),

- 3 It had to look right, and
- 4 It had to fit the existing pintles top and bottom and use the same steering cables and tiller arm yoke arrangement.

One other feature I wanted to incorporate at a later stage was wind vane steering. The options are not that many, but it did seem as if a trim tab system would be best.

After much studying of plans showing rudder areas and drafts, I settled on a blade 300 by 50 mm in cross section, with a draft of 1.55 m and an overall length (height) of 2.5 m. I was fortunate in obtaining some one-inch thick mahogany chemistry lab worktops for the blade. Two planks were routed to take a longitudinal 25 by 25 mm T section of stainless steel stiffener in the middle of the blade. This was positioned at maximum camber (30% from the leading edge). The two planks were glued using West Epoxy and clamped together onto a substantial trailer box girder to prevent risk of warping. No other fixings were used. The section of the blade housed in the stock was left square edged, but the underwater section was worked to give the optimum hydrodynamic shape. Holes were drilled through the blade (and the internal

stainless steel stiffener). A drop-nosed pin passes through two lugs on the top of the stock and retains the blade at the required height – fully down, fully up or at one of two intermediate positions. The corners of the blade that lie in the stock, have glass reinforced plastic angle screwed to them. This is readily available and considered sacrificial.

Having decided the blade dimensions, I could determine the design of the stock through which the blade would slide up and down. After swithering for long enough, I went for a stock with a horizontal top, level with the deck and with the bottom of the stock following the line of the bottom of the hull.

The frame of the stock was fabricated from stainless steel. A thick walled tube (internal diameter the same as the diameter of the pintles) forms the backbone. There are three horizontal plates. The middle one, approximately one third of the way down from the top projects through the transom and forms the tiller arrangement inside. The other two horizontal plates are at the top and bottom of the stock, the top one extended aft to provide a

platform for the ensign staff. 20 by 20 mm angle is set at each corner and provides the guides for the blade. The frame is clad with 12 mm thick mahogany.

Operation is quite straightforward. The blade is a little tight in the stock, but that's no bad thing and preferable to a sloppy blade. Retracting the blade requires a modest heave but is achievable without risking doing your back in. When the blade is up, I position a couple of rubber door wedges between the inside of the stock and the blade.

Performance is better. "Gellie" has always suffered from weather helm (even after trimming the sail plan), but I believe the deeper blade to be superior. Going astern under engine is not so good, but then the old hinged rudder in the raised position was like a barn door and gave wonderful directional ability astern.

One useful benefit is the lack of uphaul and downhaul pulleys and tackles in the aft cabin and cockpit. And there are no wires to get jammed down between the stock and the blade.



Using a Cruising Chute

Peter Davies

A137 "Baby Seal"

The Atalanta is almost certainly under canvassed. This contributes to its amazing stability as well as being responsible for its naturally staid progress. A spinnaker is a tremendous bonus in appropriate conditions, but it can wreck marriages. Getting it up (the right way) with the hallyard and sheets in their proper positions can be difficult. Getting it down again without sailing over it or dragging it along behind like a giant sea anchor can be beyond many people. Early this season I had a former Atalanta owner crewing for me and he spent 45 minutes trying to rig the spinnaker (which was hoisted in a sock with a view to making the job easier). When it did finally go up we were only able to use it for ten minutes or so before we had to turn onto a reach where the sail would not draw. Yes, you can get reaching spinnakers but they don't work all that well down wind.

My solution was to buy a cruising chute; 24 feet in the luff with an area of 235 square feet. "Baby Seal" is three quarters rigged and this is the largest chute I am prepared to handle when sailing single-handed. A slightly bigger one with a 26 foot luff would be about the limit for my rig. A mast head rigged boat would probably take a sail with a 30 foot or even 32 foot luff.

I arrived at my luff measurements by hoisting a length of twine to the spinnaker halyard block and making it off to the stem head and then adding a few inches to the resulting measurement.

The tack of the sail has to be adjustable. To this end I initially secured a snatch block to the retaining pin which passes over the stem head rollers. I have since substituted a much cheaper fixed block which is captive on the tack line between a large piston hank fitting at one end and a stopper knot at the other end. The block is still secured by the stem head retaining pin. The tack line is 14 mm braid on braid. It needs to be of large diameter as it would otherwise be hard to handle. This line

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is 12 metres long and is brought back to a cam jamming cleat on the cabin roof alongside the main hatch. To fit the jammer to the curved surface, I mounted it on a large blob of car body polyester filler and pulled the bolts just tight enough to force the resin out into a nice flat surface. Once the resin was cured, the bolts were tightened fully. Nothing has moved and the jammer is not distorted.

The spinnaker halyard had to be lengthened to bring this back to the cockpit. A turning block was screwed to the heel of the mast and a second turning block was screwed to the cabin roof just outboard of the hatch slides and immediately over the main bulkhead. Again, the loads can be considerable so very solid fixing is an absolute necessity. Another cam type jammer was fixed to the cabin roof alongside the main hatch runners. It does not matter which line is fixed to port and which one to starboard; it is more a matter of keeping them separated and out of the way of anything else.

The sheets use the original spinnaker sheet turning blocks, which in my case are mounted about half way along the toe rails on the stern deck. The sheets come forward through bulls' eyes on the cockpit coamings and to jamming cleats mounted on top of the cockpit coaming. If necessary, the sheets are long enough to go onto the normal sheet winches. However, I have not found the loads heavy enough to require the use of winches.

The sail is set in stops. The bottom was cut from a large toy bucket, and rubber bands are slid onto the bucket body. As the sail is pulled through the bucket, rubber bands are slipped over it about every three feet. Don't use thick rubber bands, as they won't break.

So far I have always rolled the staysail away prior to hoisting. It probably isn't necessary but it looks easier that way. The spinnaker halyard has to be led outside the roller gear and the tack strop led outside the pulpit. The stopped sail is then attached to the halyard, tack strop and one sheet. Hoisting it from the cockpit is easy and a firm tug on the sheet starts the rubber bands breaking. In seconds the sail is filled. Then comes the counter intuitive bit. The tack strop is eased so that the tack is about three to four feet above deck level and the halyard eased so the peak is about three feet from the sheave. The sheet is then trimmed as loose as is possible to prevent the sail collapsing.

The cruising chute works well with the wind over the quarter. It also works as a reaching

sail. When the apparent wind is on the beam it is necessary to pull down the tack a little and to tighten the halyard a little. When the apparent wind goes forward of the beam the tack and halyard have to be tightened right down and up respectively so as to make the luff as tight as the cut of the sail allows. With an apparent wind about 40 degrees forward of the beam the advantages of the sail are lost. It will still draw but leeway goes up faster than speed.

Getting it down again is easy. The tack strop is let right off so that the sail flies right forward like a large flag. The sheet is pulled in under the boom and the halyard slowly released. All perfectly safe, nobody balancing of the fore deck fighting a pole and no sail dragging in the water. Great – why didn't I have one before?

It is not just a sail for light airs. I have flown it single-handed in 25 knots when I had an offshore wind and the sea was relatively smooth. I regularly fly it in 25 to 30 knots. The boat will often sail around six-and-a-half to seven knots according to the GPS (measured across the tide when even so, there has to be some tidal component to these speeds.)

The cruising chute would probably be an even more successful sail on a mast head rigged boat. With the fractional rig the head of the chute is blanketed by the top third of the mainsail when the wind is dead astern. The head and shoulders of the cruising chute need clear air if they are to fill and maintain the stability of the sail.

It is not as powerful as a spinnaker, but it is a lot more versatile as well as being easier and safer to handle. The drive can be taken off at any time by releasing the tack line. The sail can be retrieved without any need to go on deck. This explains the need for 12 metres of tack line – it needs to be the length of the foredeck plus the length of the foot of the sail with a couple of metres left to handle.

If you want safe and reasonably affordable excitement the cruising chute is for you.



Modifications and Improvements

Keith Viewing

“Solone” A162

The Atalanta Bulletins are a mine of information, and rather boggling as you read behind the lines and recognise a superb boat, and the courage that has led them to strange waters. Solone A 162 was completed forty years ago, but the history of several owners is certainly sketchy. One of these is known simply as “the man from the Lakes”, as if some latter-day visitor from the distant past. No problem, for who-ever he was, and when ever it was, the work was excellent and the boat well cared-for.

Some of the modifications to Solone may be of interest, and for convenience the sketches are numbered for reference to the text.

Galley

The galley has a two-burner Optimus paraffin stove (1), with a small sink beneath. The sink slides out for access and cleaning (2). The cold locker is below the sink and is cool below the waterline (3). The large and ready-access cave lockers have a useful shelf above that houses small rectangular containers (4).

A closed locker for glass, honey and jams, is secured to the roof of the cabin and to the inclined bulkhead (5). The hydraulic ram for the port ballast-keel is hinged to the bulkhead and leads to the stirrup-box, below (6). A deep tray sits above the ballast-keel case (7). The galley storage space extends aft, under the port cockpit bench, well beyond the cockpit bulkhead.

Cockpit facing forward

The cabin-top is extended to provide for an instrument repeater-panel, two useful handrails, and two shallow boxes to contain the halyard tails, and a no-loose pair of pliers (8). The chart-table is to starb'd, and the charts are retained in the shelf below (9). Another shelf for small books, pencil rack, dividers and so on, extends to the inclined bulkhead (10). The bookshelf is confined by the hydraulic ram (11).

The large volume under the chart table accepts 4 or 5 plastic buckets, and a long warp. A fan is fitted to the inclined bulkhead that circulates

warm air from the heat-exchanger to both the fore and aft cabins.

The forward cockpit bulkhead has a pair of ventilators to the engine (one observer muttered about Tin-Tin), and a keel-depth indicator on each side of the companionway (12). These indicators consist of a plumb bob that slides in a slotted tube, attached by nylon fishing-line. The line is led through another much smaller tube to the keel-stirrup.

The hydraulic pump that operates the rams and therefore the keels, is fitted to the forward cockpit side-locker (13). The flares and dinghy paddles are in the centre locker (14). The seat locker contains fenders, warps and the main bilge pump, with the water tank below. The small locker to port contains oils, paraffin, and two basins (15). The fuel tank is under that bench.

Cockpit facing aft

The companionway to the aft cabin is closed, and a raft is strapped in (16). A transparent hatch is fitted to the aft deck that is hinged aft (17). The inflatable dinghy fits easily over the aft deck and provides privacy when needed. The engine throttle and gear lever are on the port bulkhead (18), and a Dunlop throwing ring is opposite (19). A Haslar vane-gear was secured to the aft rail, but was removed.

From the fore-cabin, facing aft

A Thermos flask stands upright in the safe-tray over the port keel-case (20). The tool-box is under the step (21), and a guide for the sliding wash-basin is evident (22). An opening in the bulkhead provides access to the bulk store (23). An internal hand-rail strengthens the cockpit bulkhead (24). A mirror sits close to the compass housing (25), and the dinghy rests on the deck (26). The fresh-water tank to the heat-exchanger is below the cockpit step (27).

Aground

Solone has a mast-head roller jib, and mast steps for those who are agile. The built-up cabin top provides a little more protection in bad weather. A substantial nylon hawser extends from stem to stern at the rubbing-band that is a great help when alongside.

Fore-cabin, port and starboard.

Two large lockers are secured to the inclined, bulkhead. Each locker is divided by a vertical panel directed fore and aft. The space beneath forms a trotter-box with adequate volume for the bedding in each bunk. Thus, the head is forward when at rest.

The outboard parts of these lockers are ventilated through the bottom panels, and are used for clothing, and spare blankets (28) & (29). On the port side, the inboard section has a several small cave lockers that are used for

ready access soft kit (30). There are also four small drawers useful for basic medical kit, sail-maker's kit, small electrical spares, film, spare keys, and so – on (31). A tiny shelf at the top is good for clothes pegs (32).

The starboard locker has open access to the radio equipment, with a Sailor AM/FM receiver above (33) and a Sailor VHF below (34). These units fill most of the space, but there is sufficient to store A-4 almanacs (35) and to provide a small table close to the VHF (36).



Trim and Sinkage

Mike Dixon

Last winter I researched and built a new rudder for "Gellie". This gave the opportunity to tidy up the aft cabin. In conducting the research, I was curious to find out the effect of moving the two hefty batteries from their stowage in the aft cabin to a purpose built locker just forward of the main bulkhead.

Colin Twyford had a drawing of the lines of the Atalanta and I'm pretty sure the underwater shape of the Titania is identical.

From the plans, using Simpson's rules, I established the waterplane area to be 103 square feet.

This gives a bodily sinkage of one inch for every 550 pounds (roughly a quarter of a ton) loaded.

The moment to change trim one inch is 620 foot-pounds. This means that if a twelve stone (168 pound) crew moves from the pushpit aft to the pulpit for'd (26 feet), the trimming moment will be 4368 foot-pounds – and will result in a change of trim of approximately 7 inches. In other words the draft aft will reduce by three and a half inches and the draft for'd will increase by three and a half inches.

Can any of the keen racing skippers use this information? I seem to recall from my dinghy racing days that in light airs, the boat's speed increased quite markedly if I could get the flat after body out of the water by moving my body weight well forward.



**Trip from Woodbridge, River
Deben, to the East Coast Rally
at West Mersea**

**Louise Lawton
"Emma Duck" A179**

8-13 August 2001

Mate's Log

Wed 8th

Poor weather forecast – SW 4-5, occ 6 with occ 7 overnight. Went to the pub early to plan passage from Walton to Mersea – unexplored territory and our longest voyage yet.

An unexpectedly calm night.

Thurs 9th

Waited for the inshore forecast before setting off from Ramsholt on the River Deben, SW 4-5, occ 6, thundery showers. We threw caution to the winds and set off under sail and engine for a stop over at Walton Backwaters, hoping to avoid the worst of the rain forecast.

We crossed the Deben bar at LW + 1, and the wind-whipped waves added to our anxiety as we watched the echosounder. No problem getting over but we braced ourselves for a choppy passage.

We crossed the shipping channel with no mishaps and reached Island Point at Walton some two hours after the Deben Bar and decided to drop anchor opposite the entrance to Dardenelles Creek – the cross currents making lunch a moveable feast! After lunch we took the dinghy to explore Stone Point and were delighted and amazed to see in the creek, four fluffy, white, very large birds. They weren't swans or geese, so they had to be egrets or spoonbills. Unfortunately we couldn't make out anything but feathers, but with scientific logic we have opted for the more exotic of the species! We also saw what looked like a flock of avocets, but maybe we need to invest in a more comprehensive birdwatching guide!

On hearing a loud boom, we turned round to see a thunderous black sky drawing in on us from Felixstowe, and ran to the dinghy to make a dash for the marina and escape the storm. We arrived just in time and spent a

depressing evening in the Harbour Lights restaurant with the rain lashing down outside.

That night our courage nearly failed us, and the Skipper conceded that perhaps it would be better to spend a pleasant day in Harwich Harbour, rather than attempt to get to Mersea in bad weather. However, Emma Duck's honour at the East Coast Rally was at stake, and the Mate made a firm resolution to risk certain death – or at least biliousness – and try and reach West Mersea.

Friday 10th

With lips, and souwesters, buttoned up, we set off before the inshore forecast at 7.45 to catch the flood down the coast, before we had a chance to change our minds. Luckily conditions had not deteriorated further and remained at SW4-5, occ 6. Nearing Frinton, we received a radio message from fellow Atalanta, 'Solvendo' heading down from the river Alde. Unfortunately we were not able to establish contact, but maintained visual communications for the remainder of the passage.

The passage was long, with wind against tide, but pleasant enough, until we reached the Colne Bar Buoy, when it became apparent that the occasional F6 had arrived. Emma Duck's bow crashed down onto the waves, as if she was hitting a sea of concrete, and the Mate's courage began to fail her. Unfortunately, as Bradwell Nuclear Power Station loomed menacingly before us, and the sea grew choppy, a 'securite' announcement came in over the radio, throwing the Mate into a blind panic. 'Controlled explosion..... crackle..... crackle.....1 mile exclusion zone....cracklecrackle.....4 minutes'. Only managing to get part of the coordinates, the Skipper flung himself down the hatch to attempt to plot the fix. Too late, a huge column of water rose from the sea a couple of miles in front of us and hung in the air for some seconds followed by a huge bang. Oh well, we'd be prepared for any encounters with the infamous North Sea water spouts in future.

Dejection set in as we turned towards the Nass and the waves continued to pile up, however after 10 more minutes, the swell died down and a tangible wave of relief swept over the boat. At 14.40 we turned up Thornfleet past the picturesque packing shed and kept a sharp look out for Atalantas amongst the throng of moored boats. The Skipper spotted Bluster from the Deben and headed towards her. The

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unusually loquacious and Dickensian harbour master asked us to raft up on a buoy, rather than use the pile moorings, so the Skipper contacted Solvendo and the three of us tied up together (after resolutions from the Mate to Bluster's crew to practice her bowline-tying for next year).

More and more Atalantas started to head up the channel – Lidia from Titchmarsh was next, followed by Kookaburra from Tollesbury and a surprise wildcard, the stunning Gellie, standing out in the crowd with her varnished topsides. The Mate felt suitably ashamed of her trepidation when she heard that Gellie's crew had sailed her all the way from Stonehaven that week. Bluebell, and Romara's owner (crewing for Bluebell) were the last to arrive and raft up. We looked out for Touch, who we felt sure was coming, but perhaps they had picked up a mooring further out.

A hot meal, followed by a drink at the WMYC with fellow racers and a thorough check that the courses had not changed was followed by an early night.

Sat 11th – the Atalanta Cup

As Bluster changed crew for the race, we listened to the forecast which sounded good – SW3-4 occ 5, sun. We followed everyone towards the start and decided to hold our ground by the Southern Outer Limit Mark, in order to be able to access both sides for a Westerly or Easterly course. As the ten minute gun went off, the adrenalin started to rise, and binoculars were strained on the committee boat. There was a delay in the number being displayed, but eventually a '9' was shown. The Skipper frantically pressed buttons on the GPS (the 20 courses, with roughly waypointed racing marks, had been programmed in the previous night!) located a crude map of course no 9 and we were off to the no. 3 mark.

Somehow, we lost about 3 minutes on the start, probably through a desire to keep out of the general melee of Atalantas, and a fear of crossing the line too soon. Despite having made a map of the course, the buoys proved very difficult to spot, and very easy to confuse, leading to moments of confusion during the race.

We rounded no. 3 with Solvendo and Kookaburra increasingly ahead of us, and located no. 5 on a brisk beam reach, slowing into a dead run as we followed the many boats heading for no. 2, the furthest mark. As the knots dropped away, first Bluster and then

Bluebell hoisted their spinnakers and sailed effortlessly past us, leaving us in last position. Away towards the Mersea shore, we spotted Touch, and were delighted her crew had made it after all. Very unfortunately, we found out later, due to a starboard tack incident, Touch was damaged and had to retire. The gaffers, Sadlers and dinghies certainly posed an ever-present challenge to racing, particularly on the close reach sections of the course.

As we passed no. 5, our GPS told us that no. 2 was behind us – our waymark fix was clearly way out, so we plotted a course. We jibed round no. 2 and the wind whipped round to our port bow for an exciting close haul up to no. 1. The main sheet caught round its cleat, and with much flapping and roaring of the sails, the Skipper fought to prevent Emma Duck crashing over. This exhilarating run was followed by our first mistake – to start the second lap, should we head for the SOLM as we had planned, or follow the throng of Atalantas who appeared to be heading for the NOLM. We opted for the unplanned route and tacked our way towards the Nass looking out for the mark. As we neared the northern shore, the Atalantas we had been following all turned and sped towards the SOLM, leaving us alone. Did they know something we didn't? Nearing the NOLM, the Skipper was plunged into an enormous panic – was the SOLM a mandatory mark, rather than a point to be avoided, and were we about to be disqualified for missing it out? We tacked backwards and forwards outside the line, furiously grabbing the Regatta Programme and map from under a pile of charts – and losing about 5 minutes in the process. Phew - we were OK! We turned round and headed like fury for the NOLM and heeled towards the direction of the no. 3 mark. The wind by now was whipping up and as we neared the mark, we spotted Gellie ahead of us, heeling over so far we could see her keel rubbers (we later reassured her that they were looking in mint condition!). On a dangerously close tack, we just managed to clear no. 3 and headed off for no. 5.

By now we were resigned to being last over the line, and had lowered our sights to being able to reach the finish at all.

As before, our dead run from no. 5 to no. 2 slowed us right down, despite booming out our jib, but we were pleased to see that we were still within sight of Bluster and Bluebell.

The final mark, MG, was tricky to find, being so near to no. 1, however we found what we thought was it, kept our fingers crossed and as

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we rounded it and turned towards the finish, we saw blue and white Atalantas way over the line in the distance, Gellie with her sails down in the middle distance, and Bluebell just ahead. There were still some Atalantas in view, and we were not totally disgraced! We crossed the line with a cheer, and a gunshot from the committee boat, and began to heave to and haul our sails down. Unfortunately, we then heard another gunshot, and realised we may not have actually crossed the line yet – more precious minutes lost!

As we motored back to the moorings, the Mate was overcome with post-adrenalin euphoria and relief. Not only had we managed to sail down to Mersea in unsettled weather, but also we had taken part in – and finished – the race! We were so relieved, we nearly went up the wrong channel! (First over the line, Solvendo, had lost all track of their bearings on the way back and headed up a totally different creek!) Our reward for the afternoon was to have a good look over Solvendo and Gellie, gleaned inspiration for the future, and making us even more determined to update our winches. The Hon. Sec. arrived and we went off to get showered at the club ready for the fish and chip supper.

The supper was laid out in a lovely brick and timber barn at Gun House, and it was great to be able to swap stories with everyone. Participants were joined by other East Coast owners, filling four long tables.

Colin toasted Margaret Odling, our hostess, and her helpers for organising the supper and handed out the trophies: After handicaps, Bluebell was 1st, Solvendo was 2nd and Lidia was 3rd.

A pleasant ending to an action packed and exhausting – but very satisfying day.

Sun 12th

The day dawned overcast, rainy and with howling winds. As Bluster and Solvendo got ready to cast off and head back up the coast, we tried to recall snatches of the forecast for which we had set a 4am alarm. The consensus was that F5-6, occ 7 was too blowy, even for us now seasoned old salts. We resigned ourselves to a day reading old AOA Bulletins and writing up our log. As we leaned out of the hatch, we were pleased to spot Gellie still on her pile mooring – we were not alone. We made radio contact and arranged to raft up. Then the rain came down. Some time later we decided to brave the weather and head over.

The crew of Gellie very kindly offered to share their dinner with us if, in return, we provided a starter and pudding. We duly set off for shore to top up provisions.

As the rain stopped, the wind picked up and our row back in the Dinkie to the piles was heavy going (we were of course racing Gellie's dinghy, which added to the hard work!)

David Allen appeared in his cockpit and was invited over to join the post-race celebrations. We all settled down for an extended tour of Emma Duck and Gellie and a night of ripping yarns.

As howling gales whipped around the boat, we were all reassured that we had made the right decision to stay put, and as it turned out, our ad hoc supper party was so much fun that as Gellie's Skipper put it, it turned an unpromising day into an enjoyable and memorable evening. It certainly tested - and brought out the best - in the cooks' repartees. Mexican nachos a la blowtorch were carried over from Emma Duck, followed by Gellie's cook's own chorizo and garlic surprise with crushed parmesan potatoes. The meal was finished up, after a suitable pause to recount old voyages around the Scottish isles and find a suitable pan, with American pancakes DIY suzette – all washed down with lashings of Scotch. A culinary combination which defeated even the well-seasoned stomachs of Gellie's crew.

We were particularly enthralled with David's account of Emma Duck's voyage with his old sailing chum, to Tunisia, Alexandria and Egypt in the '70s. Alas, for poor Emma Duck the mud holes of the East Coast must seem a long way from the blue skies of the Med! Favourite passages, yacht design, distinguished sailors, architecture, the vagaries of the Thames Coastguard Maritime Information Service, and even kite flying, were all chewed on, ruminated and thoroughly digested as the perfect finale to our first East Coast Rally drew to a close.

The forecast promised SW F4-5, so we decided to head off in the morning and try and make the whole passage in one. As Gellie was off to the Thames and Tower Bridge however, it looked like her crew would be spending the day sampling the delights of Bradwell Marina.

Mon 13th

We set off at 8.30 for the Deben and waved goodbye to our new friends. A much smoother

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exit from the Blackwater this time, and we were making excellent speed – reaching our best recorded speed under sail so far of 5.9 knots. As we passed the Naze the wind whipped up giving us some classic ‘Solent Breezes’ (otherwise known as spray in the face) and we made good headway across the shipping lane – turning early to the Rolling Ground buoy as we had a clear channel. We reached the Deben Bar at 3.20, 40 minutes earlier than our projected time. Catching the full force of the flood, we sped up to the Horse

buoy under sail in an amazing 5 minutes, making 7 knots over the ground.

We reached our mooring in Martlesham Creek at 4.50pm, under motor, and packed up Emma Duck, ready for her introduction to her sponsor, the Skipper’s grandmother, the following weekend. As we headed across Dartford Bridge on our way home, our thoughts were filled with happy memories of the highs and lows of our first East Coast Regatta. Definitely an experience to be repeated.



“GELLIE”

2001 Cruise

The East Coast Rally and Tower Bridge

Stonehaven to West Mersea 3rd to 10th August

We had varied conditions on the way south. We had some good sailing and a moderate amount of motoring. On the Bridlington to Lowestoft leg we were obliged to duck into Grimsby for the night on account of forecast gales. This resulted in us being a bit tight for time, and we had a couple of night sails to take advantage of favourable tides.

Never mind, motoring up the channel at West Mersea made up for it. “Gellie” has never rubbed shoulders with other family members before and the sight of all those boats together in one place made the trip south worthwhile.

West Mersea and the Thames 11th to 19th August

The next couple of days were great fun. Saturday’s race was very enjoyable and “Gellie” acquitted herself well, though it turned out the committee boat hadn’t timed her. Never did find out why, but it didn’t matter as it was a superb occasion.

Colin Twyford, the Hon Secretary came aboard in the afternoon, and there was much mutual admiration of the boats.

Margaret Odling hosted the traditional fish and chip supper at Gun House for all the crews. After reading about it for so many years, it was quite delightful to be part of it at last.

Back to the foreshore for the superb fireworks display and then a tow back though the moorings astern of Rick Wick’s motorised dinghy.

Sunday morning was pretty wet and miserable and unseasonably chilly. After arranging with Tom and Louise on “Emma Duck” for a joint dinner, we decided to meet up with Stan and Sheila for lunch. By the time we got ashore, the rain had dried up and though blustery and cold, the afternoon wasn’t too bad. We explored the delightful collection of houses and cottages known locally as the city, and poked our noses into the chandlery (well it’s obligatory, isn’t it?). I wasn’t aware that West Mersea was the home of the famous Dabchick Sailing Club – most impressive with its acres of Oppies in the dinghy park.

Dinner that evening was fluid - in two ways. First the amount of liquid that seemed to be flowing and secondly that the meal was prepared and cooked on both boats. Tom and Louise provided the starter and desert (the former flame grilled nachos using a blow torch!) and Terry did the main course on “Gellie”. David Allen and I did the washing up and Sarah poured the drinks. Before the evening became got too blurred we pulled out the Thames estuary chart. David gave me

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some useful local knowledge about the various options. A truly memorable evening!

On the Monday, Sarah and I decided we needed a change of scenery, plus "Gellie" needed to be fed with water and fuel. We dropped down the channel stemming the flood before heading across to Bradwell marina, where we moored at 1700. A quiet, unassuming kind of marina with very friendly staff. We berthed between "Peter Duck" and a 1907 vintage Kings Lynn built smack "Lily May".

Next morning we went along to the small post office cum village store – down a country lane complete with country smells. Not much on offer, but sufficient for our needs.

We left the marina just after 1100 in flat calm. There was a slight haze but not enough to worry about. This was very much new territory for "Gellie" as well as for her crew (leastways on small boats). Following the buoys (and David's advice) was straightforward enough, though I have to admit that being in seven feet of water barely in sight of land is a little off-putting for someone more used to the rugged coastline of Scotland. We managed a couple of hours sailing in the afternoon, and entered the Medway channel just before 1800, mooring up to a vacant visitor's buoy at Queenborough at 1918.

Next morning was hot – at last! Ashore for supplies and kindly driven back down to the jetty by the assistant harbour master.

After lunch, we sailed from the mooring with a couple of hours of ebb to run. Cutting across the Grain Spit to the Nore Swatch buoy, we picked up the flood to carry us all the way up to Erith. We had a great sail in gloriously hot sunshine with a freshening south-westerly breeze. Eventually the wind headed us and, though sorely tempted, I thought it imprudent to beat up the river. So we made our way up past Gravesend, Tilbury and under the Queen Elizabeth Bridge at Dartford to Erith, where Sarah picked up a mooring at the yacht club.

Colin and Janet Twyford came over from "Hiran" for dinner and a discussion about tactics for the trip up to Tower Bridge and Limehouse Basin the next day. The forecast was for more of the same so it looked as if it would be a motoring day.

We set off just after 0800 the next morning. It was blowing well and the wind across tide was kicking up three to four foot waves in the more exposed reaches and making tea drinking

something of a hazardous activity. We passed through the Thames barrier at 0945 (very impressive) and gave a token nod to the Dome a short while later. Canary Wharf dominated the skyline whilst we circled the Isle of Dogs, passing Greenwich on the way.

By the time we got up to the lower pool it was blowing a good force five, but I was determined to achieve the objective even if it meant shoving in two reefs. So it was that at 1100, "Gellie" tacked to and fro off Tower Bridge whilst Janet took what turned out to be a great set of photos. Sarah concentrated on the sailing (superbly well I might add) whilst I concentrated on navigational hazards (strong tide, moored objects and floating objects).

Great fun but a bit nerve wracking! Sails down and motor downstream for a mile to Limehouse Basin. 547 miles from home. A welcome lunch on board "Hiran" and a leisurely afternoon in the cockpit. Dinner (OK-ish) in the Cruising Association.

David arrived on board mid afternoon having flown into London City airport from Aberdeen. "Gellie" now had the full crew on board for the return trip north.

Saturday was quite a bit cooler. Locking out into the river at 1248, we had the last of the flood to contend with for an hour and a half. Once the ebb became established we fairly flew down the river. There were no firm plans as to when we'd stop for the night, but progress was so good, I decided we could make Queenborough. Mid afternoon the rain came on and for a couple of hours visibility was very poor – eyeball navigation keeping the mud flats in sight to starboard whilst remaining outside the channel, all the time keeping a watchful eye on the echo sounder. The flood was just beginning to make as we crossed Grain Spit into the Medway. Being Saturday night, the visitor mooring buoys were chock-a-block and after a particularly unpleasant encounter with a moored motor cruiser we made our way alongside a moored Thames barge.

We did 60 miles the next day, but it was a bit epic! Leaving the berth at 0700, we had sails up within half an hour. The wind was southerly force five. Once out of the lee of the Kent coast, the seas began to build and by mid morning the wind had increased to six with occasional seven. "Gellie" was making good progress but the motion was most uncomfortable. David spent most of the day on the helm with the occasional spell from Sarah, whilst I navigated. Fortunately the

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visibility was moderate and we had no difficulty in identifying the buoys.

Because of the swell (two to three metres by now), I wasn't happy about crossing over to the Wallet north of the Gunfleet sands, so we continued down the King's channel. Bearing away to the east, we kept a healthy two miles off the Gunfleet sands to leeward. It was somewhat bizarre to see the participants in a yacht race hammering up to the west obviously with no similar fears about a lee shore.

At 1500 we gybed onto port and altered up to the north. The Medusa channel was out – less than two metres of tide (and falling) and a couple of two metre patches, but with a good three metre swell running, I didn't feel inclined to put the kick up keels to the test. So it was to the east of the Cork sands, hardening up off the Cork sand beacon with a long slog almost to windward to get into Harwich. Twelve hours to the minute, we were all secured in Shotley marina – completely knackered but once again well pleased with “Gellie's” seaworthiness.

Harwich to Stonehaven 20th to 25th August

By contrast, the remainder of the trip home was quite unexceptional. The wind remained favourable for a couple of days but then died away to almost nothing. From just north of Cromer, we motored the whole way home. Very very tedious.

Total distance was 1013 miles. Whilst the loose objectives were met, it was far too ambitious in the time allowed. It would have been far kinder (on everyone, including “Gellie”) to have taken longer – and to have spent more time exploring the rivers and creeks in the Thames estuary. Having said that, the West Mersea experience alone made it worthwhile – thanks to everyone who made us so welcome.

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