

Atalanta Owners Association
66th Annual Bulletin 2024 - 2025



Produced by the Atalanta Owners Association
www.atalantaowners.org

From the editor

I am undoubtedly echoing the repeated pleas of past editors in urging members, or indeed, any interested individuals, in planning for a contribution to the Bulletin **before** the start of the season and thus reducing the air of panic when November comes around with no apparent contents to hand! Having said that, members have made great efforts this year to submit a varied range of contributions which I hope provides us with an enjoyable and diverting review of activities throughout the year together with recollections from the past. Many thanks to those who have made the effort this year and let us hope that the weather is more settled next year allowing members to enjoy their boats being on the water and provide the material for more contributions in 2025. Remember it is not essential to wait until next November to send in a contribution, everything will be welcomed.

editor@atalantaowners.org

Cover photograph, Sugar Plum by Greg Manning

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From the Commodore. Jonathan Stearn

I am honoured to take over from Mike Dixon as your Commodore. Mike steered the AOA with a steady hand and keen eye, and before his departure, set in motion a series of reforms designed to put the AOA on a sound footing for the foreseeable future. Most of these reforms are now in place, thanks to the dedicated work of the Committee.

Although I have been sailing A183 Bluster, my Atalanta 26, since 1973 when it was owned by my parents, Ted and Jane, I have to confess that I only joined the AOA in 2017. After working abroad for 20 years, I then moved to Scotland; I only managed family cruises when home on leave and later, during summer holidays. With my parents no longer around, it fell to me to look after Bluster and support the AOA.

Atalantas and Fulmars are great boats with a distinguished pedigree and some ground-breaking features. I do not know of any other easilyailable cruising yachts around at the time they were built, but someone will probably correct me on this! The Science Museum formerly had a model of one on exhibition for a while.

These Fairey Marine boats are part of our heritage and deserve to be preserved, and the best way to do that is for us to continue to use them for the weekend sails and short cruises for which they were designed. They have been sailed across the Atlantic and further afield, but most are now getting a bit old for such adventures. Society's, and our own attitude to risk has also changed. Weather patterns seem to be changing and generally becoming less settled, although selective memories of those balmy days of yore may be playing a part. However, the advent of relatively cheap and compact communications (VHF and smart mobile 'phones), navigation aids (GPS and electronic charting), and more reliable weather forecasts, even for three or more days ahead, mean that, we should all be able to plan some safe but adventurous cruising.

We also need to interest others, especially a younger generation, in the boats, in their maintenance, and in their sailing abilities. If Atalantas were classic cars there would be enthusiasts restoring them, and even driving them on fine days. Atalantas deserve better than this as they are still very practical yachts, but the more people we can interest in them, the more will survive. The AOA is there to support new owners and enthusiasts as well as our existing members.

I hope you enjoy reading this Bulletin and that it inspires you to plan some adventures in 2025.

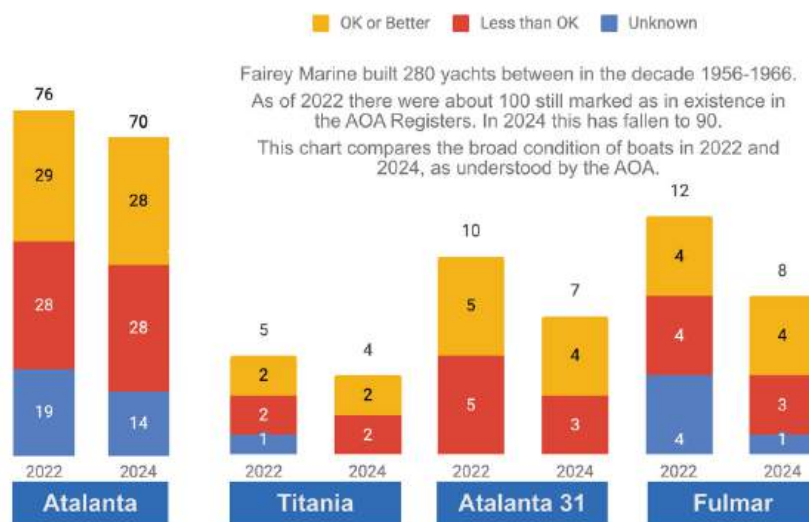
Atalanta Fleet Review 2024 – What has changed since 2022?

In the [2022-2023 Annual Bulletin](#) we attempted to document objectively the status of the 'Fleet', updating the conditions of boats and what they were currently doing (sailing, being restored etc). Since then there have been many changes. The current status of all boats is shown in the 2024-2025 Yearbook published with this Annual Bulletin.

The charts compare the situation in 2022 with now, based on what we know. The numbers are shown in the two charts. Down from just over one hundred in 2022 to ninety at the end of 2024. Of course, you may know of other changes – please tell us!

Please email: sec@atalantaowners.org

Boat Conditions - 2024 compared to 2022



Boat Status - 2024 compared to 2022



Remembering Colin Twyford 1931 - 2024

Nick Philips



Colin owned A95 Hiran for forty-four years. For twenty-four of those years, until 2017, he served as Honorary Secretary and then Commodore of the AOA. He dedicated significant time and energy to the cause of the AOA throughout this period. This was evidenced perhaps no more so than when he fulfilled both Commodore and Honorary Secretary roles at the same time after a hiatus involving AOA Officers. He remained a member until his death in September of this year.

Colin was a keen and successful tennis player and golfer from his teenage years. He took up sailing in his late forties and bought Hiran in 1983, sailing her from Erith Yacht Club on the River Thames with his young family. A notable trip with Janet, his wife, was to join the AOA exhibition at team at Beale Park when an extraordinary spate required them to abandon the trip at Teddington lock. In addition to his involvement in the AOA Colin was also Commodore of the Erith Yacht Club at the time they were negotiating the sale of their old Club ship (a Norwegian ferry) and the building of the current clubhouse aided by a very generous Lottery grant. This would have been a good use of Colin's considerable diplomatic skills.

As well as sailing Hiran Colin spent many hours dealing with the challenges of an ageing Atalanta, drawing on the help and advice from other AOA members. This inspired him to help all owners by writing up his solutions in the Bulletin and some of what became the AOA's series of Technical Papers.

Major General Bill Odling was AOA Commodore when Colin joined the AOA. Bill and Hon. Secretary George Parker had worked to document the history of the AOA and create a 'Register of Boats' detailing what was known of the history and ownership of each boat. From when he became Hon. Secretary in 1993 Colin applied himself to building this into the Boat Registers we know today. He meticulously recorded details of work done on the boats and their voyages in

the Register books and researched gaps in boats' histories. This work is what forms the heart of the AOA's current online Boat Register.

The Registers depend on regular contact with owners. One of Colin's distinguishing attributes as Hon.Secretary and Commodore was his focus on trying to communicate personally with every owner, every year. That personal approach made sure that owners felt supported by the Association as that the Association was aware of what was happening to all of the boats.

From Colin's first Newsletter as Hon.Secretary in Spring 1993:

Ten years ago Janet and I came across A95 Hiran. alone and forlorn in a field, with her bilges full of water and through Hiran I was introduced to the Atalanta Owner's Association. For the last ten years I have enjoyed the support and assistance of the Officers and members whose paths I have strayed upon. The problems that I have come across in the continuing process of restoring Hiran (and there are many) have been resolved or explained and I am most grateful. Now that I have the responsibility of being Hon. Secretary I would like to assure all members that I will do my best to continue to give the same service that I have always been able to enjoy.

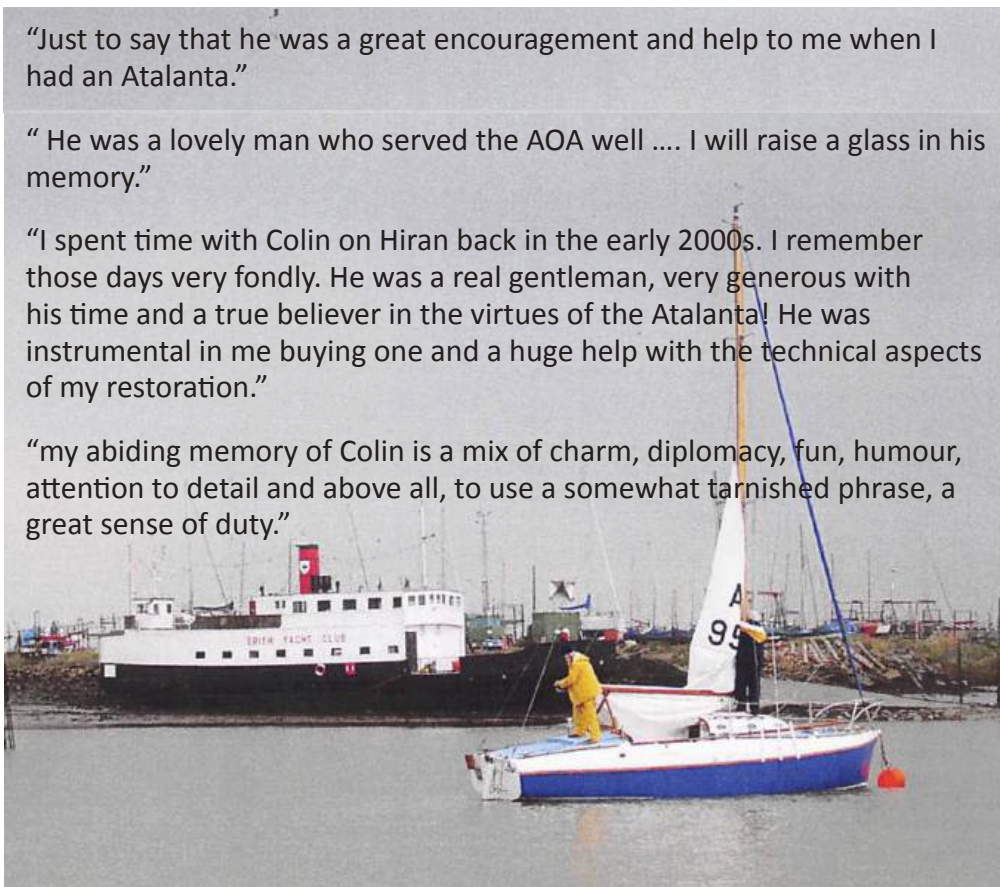
And he did just that. The greatest theme running through feedback from AOA members and ex-members in response to Colin's death was what a knowledgeable, kind and helpful man he was.

"Just to say that he was a great encouragement and help to me when I had an Atalanta."

"He was a lovely man who served the AOA well I will raise a glass in his memory."

"I spent time with Colin on Hiran back in the early 2000s. I remember those days very fondly. He was a real gentleman, very generous with his time and a true believer in the virtues of the Atalanta! He was instrumental in me buying one and a huge help with the technical aspects of my restoration."

"my abiding memory of Colin is a mix of charm, diplomacy, fun, humour, attention to detail and above all, to use a somewhat tarnished phrase, a great sense of duty."



Thank you Colin

Fairey Atalanta Shore Based Social on Saturday 11 May and AGM on Sunday 12 May 2024

This event was a great success with 20 members attending the daytime events and 25 members had a lively dinner at the famous Still & West pub on the banks of Portsmouth Harbour. Only one boat managed to sail to the event, so well done to Steve McCann for bringing A89 Colchide, accompanied by another member Dave Ewing. Well done also to Steve & Dave for fixing a very unusual snapped impeller pin whilst sailing past Lee on Solent. On Colchide, the rearwards facing engine and hydraulic drive, that involved removing the flywheel, 2 fanbelts, the alternator and impeller housing.



We met for lunch and a catch up at noon at the Mary Rose Cafe, in the wonderful Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

We naturally split into smaller groups and set off to explore the Dockyard. Some started at Boathouse 4 boatbuilding exhibition, some the Mary Rose, some HMS Victory, or HMS Warrior and some decided, as the weather was so good, to go straight out to do a harbour tour.



Colchide having just been repainted and with brand new standing rigging on show at Gunwharf Quay



We were also very lucky as the PHD was having a pontoon open weekend and we visited the ex Falkland War Landing Craft F8, a Motor Gun Boat (MGB) and High Speed Launch (HSL 102)



Member Aaron Todd at the helm of the MGB

Most AOA members had bought the ultimate ticket which gave 12 months unlimited access to all the following:

Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower
Royal Navy Submarine Museum
Action Stations
Harbour Tours
Dockyard Apprentice
The Mary Rose Museum
HMS Victory
HMS Warrior
HMS M.33
National Museum of RN Galleries
Boathouse 4 boatbuilding exhibition



This torpedo boat was designed in 1916 and the shape was remarkably similar to our own Atalanta, for further details see page....



On board HMS Alliance (P417/S67) - surprisingly spacious despite all the hardware

That evening, we all met at the Still & West Pub for dinner and at 2.30 pm on the Sunday it was time for the AGM and 20 members were well looked after by The Royal Maritime Hotel who lent us their Hood Room for our AGM. The hotel was only a few hundred metres from Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

In summary a great weekend, enjoyed by all.



25 members enjoying dinner at the Still & West pub, which had wonderful views over Portsmouth Harbour



Please will you help preserve Atalantas and the AOA

There is one simple thing that we can all do to keep Fairey Atalantas sailing – share our admiration for them to as many people as possible! The most visible place we have to do this is on the internet.

Please will you (with a ‘thank you’ to those who already do):

- Add comments
At its simplest, you could comment on posts made by others on the AOA website or Facebook. A simple ‘Great Post’ will suffice, or your own views on the subject – whatever you want. The aim is to generate a visible conversation.
- Or Post a photo with a caption
- Share your admiration for them to as many as possible.
- Post a photograph to the website. Or send it to the webmaster at webmaster@atalantaowners.org to post. Just a photo and a caption is great, or if you have time a paragraph or two
- Or post it to your own Facebook page or the Fairey Atalantas Facebook group
- Or maybe even Write an article for the Annual Bulletin or yachting pressCruises, modifications, memories or just opinionsDon’t wait until Autumn, editors will accept articles at any time of the year
- Don’t forget – you could win one of the AOA trophy awards

The AOA website is at atalantaowners.org and you don’t need to log in to add comments.

The Fairey Atalantas Facebook group is at www.facebook.com/groups/faireyatalantas

The AOA Editor can be contacted at editor@atalantaowners.org

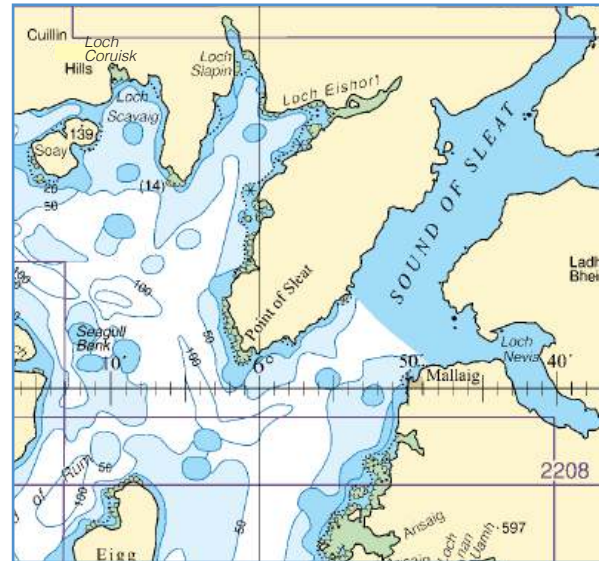
The [Autumn 2024 Newsletter](#) (available on the website) described the changes we are making to widen support for the Atalanta with a view to keeping as many as possible sailing. The Committee are working hard on the changes but we really do need YOUR help. The ‘Fleet Review Update’ elsewhere in this Bulletin illustrates that the fleet is shrinking, down from over one hundred boats in 2022 to just ninety now. An equivalent review of the membership shows a similar story with membership down from seventy-one in 2022 to sixty now.

Over the Sea to Skye

Summer 2024 Greg Manning

A142 Sugar Plum is kept on a swinging mooring at Arisaig for the four summer months. It is an ideal location with access to the Inner Hebrides, the Small Islands and numerous Lochs on the mainland.

It suits me well as for lifestyle reasons I usually only sail for a few days at a time. The only disadvantage is that it is a one hundred and seventy miles drive from my home near Aberdeen. The moorings at Arisaig is at the eastern end of Loch nan Ceall which forms a rather tortuous channel that takes about forty minutes from the open sea.



Among all the places to explore, the Lochs on the South of Skye have been visited over the years and as they are a day's sailing from Arisaig ideal short adventures.

My wife had a friend who owned a cottage at Dornie which is near the Kyle of Loch Alsh and these two ladies had extensively explored the area round Skye including taking a RIB from Elgol to visit a spectacular water fall where the outfall from Loch Coruisk cascades into Loch Cuilce at the northern end of Loch Scavaig.

In 2018 my previous co-owner Roy had a pink chit for a couple of days to come sailing. For those of a non military background a pink chit is authority from the senior member of the domestic management committee for one to have a few days away. The weather was forecast fine and it turned out to be accurate so we sailed in near perfect conditions. The pilotage into Loch Cuilce is fairly straightforward with a well sheltered mooring behind a couple of islands. Very disappointedly there were already three yachts anchored, my hope is to find places where no one else goes.



We rowed ashore and with no jetty we had to clamber up rocks and pull the little inflatable up behind us. It was very fine weather but alas no waterfall to be seen as there had been a very dry period. Oh well, it does mean that I will have to return one day after a period of wet weather to see the elusive waterfall.



Although it was a sheltered anchorage the wind whistled through the rigging during the night and I was wondering whether the sail back to Arisaig was going to be more exciting than I would like. I need not have worried as by the time we had had breakfast the weather was again near perfect and we sailed back on a broad reach with the main and number 1 jib.

In July 2019 I visited Loch Slapin. My friend Bruce was free to join me and as he had a friend who lived near the east coast of the loch a free dinner was on the passage plan. Like our Commodore, Bruce was a North Sea geologist and had also spent two seasons in Antarctica so I had a competent and practical crew.

We had a good sail up in F3-4 and very fine weather. Very little wild life was seen which is hardly surprising as Bruce and I singing the Skye Boat Song at full voice would have frightened away even a nuclear submarine! In order to make our ETA for dinner the motor had to be started with about ten miles to run. The loch has no obstructions so entry is straight forward. It is most spectacular as it is below Bla Bheinn which is one of the Black Cuillins of Skye but separate from the main ridge. The chart shows fish farms but on our arrival found they were gone leaving numerous large mooring buoys so of course we took advantage of bagging one of them.



We rowed ashore to wait for the lift to our dinner but due to some misunderstanding there was an hour's delay and one thing Loch Slapin does not have is any mobile phone coverage so we just had to wait. The error must have been that geologists think in thousands of years and not minutes in an hour! The Skye Midges attacked in tactical Squadrons and even

Wing Formations! We had of course left our midge hoods and repellent on board!

The dinner was well worth the wait, stew and dumplings. I do so love traditional food which now seems impossible to find as trendy cosmopolitan items are now generally considered preferable.

Overnight there was the gentle pitter patter of rain on the blister but it was a clear morning so breakfast was taken in cockpit. A Sea Eagle and Heron were enjoying the morning too. The sail back to Arisaig started well with a light breeze but once again the motor was called to action stations in order not to spend the night drifting aimlessly around the Sound of Sleat!

On a previous motor down the channel from Arisaig I had recorded waypoints for the route so on our return Bruce sat at the chart table with the GPS for company and called out headings and distances to practice routing if the visibility was very poor. It was not a great success as some of the legs are so short that there was barely time to get on track before a new heading was needed.

Over the years I have fewer and fewer people who will sail with me, some claim that they are no longer fit and healthy so they are excused however, the main problem is being able to predict when the weather will be suitable for a sail and people have their lives to plan. I have



started sailing single handed which is a challenge as I am a “hanker” and have boom roller reefing, I do have a Tiller Pilot that makes it possible. I decided that a return to Loch Slapin would be an ideal single handed sail so shortly after going there with Bruce a plan was hatched.

It did turn out to be challenging with both sail changes and the need for a reef down to the first batten. On arriving at the entrance to the Loch a big shower developed.



I was not at all concerned but thought it a good part of my training to use an iPad that I have solely for navigation. Roy had downloaded the Admiralty Charts using Memory Map, The iPad goes into a waterproof cover and I found it got rather hot but also any spray on the plastic cover could not be wiped off as it upset the touch screen. Mr iPad and I were becoming friends until I looked down and saw BARRA in big letters. It

would seem that Mr iPad’s knowledge of the geography of the west coast of Scotland is somewhat lacking! As we all know Barra is in the Outer Hebrides and not Skye! I spoke to Mr iPad in clear Anglo-Saxon language which resulted in him having a “hissy-fit” and the screen went into pixilated squares. I put him on a disciplinary charge and confined him to the chain locker!

I had a boring night on board, I am not good at wasting time and even reading Col Regs didn't prove to be entertaining!

Before the sail back to Arisaig I released Mr iPad from the cabin locker, he had repented in the night and was showing the correct chart and our position. The sail back was exhilarating with number 1 jib and full main on a broad reach with clear skies and sunshine. Mr iPad had the last word as all the way he showed the speed and direction vector arrow 180 degrees out!

During the above trips lurking on the edge of the chart was Loch Eishort. When sailing to Slapin the mouth of this loch was plain to see. It did not seem to offer anything other than it needed to be explored and there might be something in there to tempt the innocent.

This past season has been about the worst for sailing on the West Coast of Scotland that I can remember in the last twenty plus year. With a high pressure repeatedly building over the Azores depressions and their associated fronts kept brushing past giving weeks of strong winds. I did manage a couple of day sails when I identified a ridge of high pressure passing but I visited Sugar Plum more times to check she was safe and secure than I did to sail. I did have a plan in the back of my mind for an adventure but it was not going happen in 2024!

My friend Stevie had the same problem, he keeps a modern yacht at Whitehills on

the Moray Firth and each year he plans a trip to either Orkney or Shetland but this year that was not going to happen. In August out of frustration Stevie volunteered to crew for me. I say crew, but when I have experienced people on board it is very much by agreement especially with Stevie as we had flown together as North Sea Helicopter pilots for many years. The time we had available together with the forecast suggested a trip to Loch Eishort was going to work.

We set off in ideal conditions on a reach but great caution is needed as when passing Tokavaig on the west side of the Point of Sleat as there are a few rocks and skerries that are there to scare the unwary. Dogha Daraich dries 0.3 and we were passing fairly close to LW! The wind died and I was happy to be chugging for the two miles into the Loch which too has enough rocks and skerries to frighten off the faint hearted. It is not helped by the fact that the Clyde Cruising Club pilotage book suggest that there are errors on the Admiralty Chart. The Loch was charted in 1931 and no doubt no great importance was given to it. Maybe a Midshipman and two defaulters did the survey!

The team work between Stevie on the helm keeping a good look out and me cross checking the chart the cruising club guide and yes, Mr iPad too, resulted in us safely arriving at moorings NE of the island of En Heast. There were numerous buoys and a resident yacht

kindly suggested which one we could take and a very satisfied crew did find that the spirit locker was not empty!

The next morning we left at HW, ouch! Not a rock or skerry was showing other than the occasions swirling in the water. No pictures were taken during this trip as we were both fully occupied managing the pilotage.

That was the end of the 2024 season which had a sting in its tail as the weather proved to be very good into September by which time Sugar Plum was on her way home to be undercover in her purpose made shed for the winter.



A year of Blogs

A brief selection by the editor of blog contributions from the AOA website over the last year that some of you may have missed, mainly chosen as they included good photographs!

■ 3.12.23 A104 Arosa

Advertised for sale at the end of the year, still looking for a new home?



■ 20.12.23 A31.4 Gellies 'new' engine
A 1957 Perkins 4107 diesel originally fitted to another Atalanta. Now with new ancillaries and shiny paint, hopefully ready for a good few hours to come!



■ 01.24 Archive picture of Bordeaux submarine pens [A35]

Unfortunately this tourist opportunity is no longer open to the public although we have read that French nationals can visit by arrangement!



■ **08.01.24 A161 Amber Ellen**

Always good to see boats popping up unexpectedly, a sighting in Ullapool



■ **5.02.24 A32-4 Gellie**

Update



■ **13.02.24 A1 Atalanta en route to Cowes Classic Boat Museum**

Now looking every inch a classic, heroic work in the transition from the sad state she was back in 2016



■ **31.03.24 A124 Helene**

Off to Friesland and shallow waters.



■ **06.05.24 A31.10 Zambra**

Zambra at last emerges from her shed and on to the water with an additional crew.



■ **22/08/24 A 31 Destiny**

More classic boats in the Netherlands



■ **24/08/24 A23 Gypsy**

Fascinating account of family sailing in Newfoundland in the 1970s

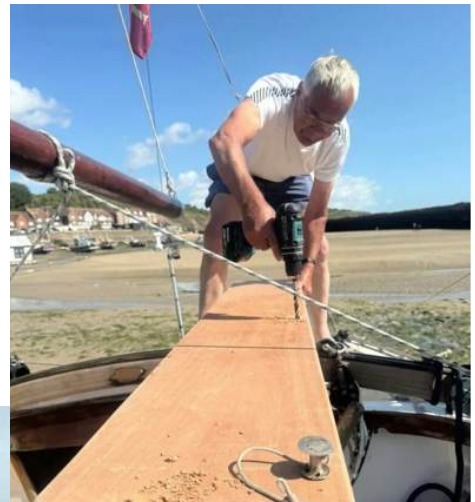


■ **09/09/24 A150 Salizanda 2**

Neusiedle-See near Vienna, Salizanda clearly very well looked after - see also rear cover



■ **12/09/24 A138 Sweet Sue** was caught out by Storm Lilian en route from Guernsey to the West Mersea Regatta resulting in breaking both her rudder blade and boom! However, despite the conditions, the skipper and crew made it to Folkestone where the AOA Salvaged Parts scheme produced a replacement boom and a new rudder was speedily fashioned.



■ **16/09/24 A68 Curlew**

Fully reconditioned Yanmar ready to install



■ **16/09/24 A68 Curlew** Extensive renovation in progress

Good to see that the traditional Atalanta restoration skills are still with us. Fingers crossed for the keel box condition...



■ **16/10.24 A169 Elle**

Seagull outboard auxiliary, historically appropriate technology but ear defenders required for extended use!



A year with A89

Stephen McCann A89 Colchide

A89 lived up to Mr Fox's vision for a safe family adventure yacht during a four day exploration during part of our summer holiday. She certainly held her own in Force 6 gusting 7 and she felt really safe on top of reasonably rolling waves. We battled all sorts of conditions and changed our plans a few times. However, I was delighted when as the sun was setting on the Beaulieu River, my wife Claire, glass of red wine in hand, said. "I now get it".



I became the owner of A89 in October 2023. And in the last bulletin I explained how she came into my ownership and I took control of her. I kept her in the water for the majority of the winter and only recently took her out in April. The plan was to work on the interior and give her an

overdue lick of paint with a view to having her ready for the summer ahead. You may have read something of the history of Colchide. The biggest thing I scratched my head around was the engine. I had find trying to get A89 up the Hamble against the flow very difficult. Whilst the Faryman A30 Single Cylinder Engine with hydraulic drive is reliable and great for mooring in marinas, it loses a lot of efficiency and so the 10HP of engine does not really translate to the propeller. I've spent ages looking at this but, the only thing to do is to throw cash at the problem and I don't have that!

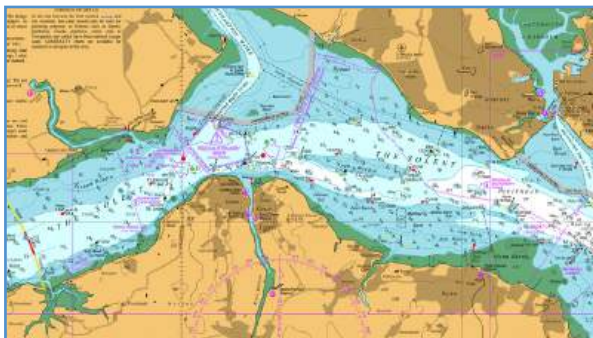
The main thing I managed to do was to improve the standing and running rigging. Jay from Rig Masters who originally put up the mast for first launch was on hand to take down the mast and then start on some pre-agreed work. He wanted to tackle the old spreaders and modernise a lot of the rigging. As he said to me at the time "it'll do for the Solent, but don't be crossing to the Azores with this old set up..."

I was very keen to have some lazy jacks added as it makes it so much easier with limited hands or small children on board to manage the raising and lowering of the main sail. Jay also sought out an old mast winch for me, and it's been transformative to be able to apply a bit of extra power to raising the main. Really annoyingly, I had to spend a fortune on a new furling system for the Head Sail. The previous one had become damaged over time and

even more annoyingly the cheapest pro-Furl (which had twin tracks) was 30cm too short for me. Next step up was almost £1000 more and no twin tracks – so bang went my vision of twin head sails down wind...However, things are never simple because the first time I tried to raise my Genoa, it realised that modern bolt ropes are much thinner and so off to the sail loft I went (more cash..).

The planned interior renovation never really happened, as with everything I ran out of time. However, we had great fun painting her with some friends who lived locally in the May sun and getting her spick and span.

The exciting moment happened when I drove down to Drivers Dry Dock in Southampton and handed over to Jay to put the mast on and get her ready on a glorious Friday evening just before the May annual AGM. I launched Colchide with David Ewing, the now owner of A89's inverse palindrome sistership A68. We had known each other from the Wayfarer Association and had done a few adventures together. Heading off as the sun set on a beautiful Friday evening, our plan was to get to Hamble Point, the spiritual



home of the Atlanta, moor overnight and have a beer.

Whilst enroute the engine temperature indicator flickered, it went out again and we thought nothing more of it. However, it made a dramatic reappearance when approaching Lee on Solent. Things got quite hot and we realised that the cooling system was not working. Fortunately, a lot of the Atlanta Association were in a pub together and could do an operations dial-in with engineering and they guided us through the “simple process” of merely taking off the drive wheel, alternator and a few other bits and pieces to get at the impeller. It's made slightly worse on Colchide because the engine is back to front and has a large hydraulic pump impeding access. I did my best to sail her against the tide maintaining position whilst Dave was in the bilge fixing the problem. I would have been snookered if I was on my own.



Needless to say all sorted and we eventually got round the point and with the limitations of the engine made it into Gun Wharf quay. It was wonderful to be able

to bring at least one vessel to the AGM and it was brilliant to meet everybody in person. Oh, and have a few beers.



Frustratingly, the next time I was at Gun Wharf Quay it was to drop my son off to the Tall Ships programme. Unfortunately we were asked to moor up on the outer harbour wall and with vertical motion experienced during blustery choppy conditions the forward starboard cleat was pulled clean through the foredeck leaving a rather annoying hole. Not wanting to lose a summer's worth of sailing, I managed to find some anti slip deck pads which looked like great big sticky plasters and covered the whole. I intend to do a proper fix once she's out of the water.

The time then came to have a summer family adventure on the water. I only managed to convince the youngest or rather told her to come, and with my wife Claire we set out from the RAF Yacht Club, sailing over to Cowes. We had intended to sail to Newtown Creek, but with very strong westerlies and unfavourable tides that was not possible. It was their first time adventuring in a yacht and



wonderful to make a crossing and step off at a marina to explore somewhere new. Naturally. We seem to attract lots of curious people, many for whom said. "My goodness is that in Atlanta", cue a conversation about youthful days.



Struggling with the engine on the second day. We tried to cross the Solent to get to Beaulieu. However, the engine just wasn't up to it and it took us a really long time just to get as far as Egypt Point (going backwards a lot).

We fuffed around for a bit (4 hours!) and eventually returned to the Marina. Whilst we were mid Solent I realised that the

head sail was fraying where the clew ring is attached. Fortunately, North Sails were open and were able to fix it overnight. With a combination of Colchide's inboard and my 2 1/2 horsepower outboard, we managed to cross over to the Beaulieu River, which is a really interesting arrival process. Super strong winds and a strong tide focused our minds - we had a few hairy moments. However, that all evaporated as the wind died and we slowly made our way up the river. Watching the birds sweep around us and experiencing the relatively quiet river it felt otherworldly in comparison to out on the Solent. We were lucky in that the marina was full and so we had to take a visitors mooring. This was slightly downstream from the marina around the corner and offered the most blissful, peaceful setting which caught the sun beautifully on the river as it set.



Sitting beside Claire as the sunset and having played in the river during the afternoon. I was pleased I'd made the leap and bought Colchide.



Single handed Mast Raising / Lowering

Chris Green

A169 Elle

To raise and lower the mast on an Atalanta is fairly straightforward – even single-handed. The method has been well documented since the early days of Fairey Atalanta production and there are several articles on this on AOA website and back issues of the Bulletin.

Tripods

The technical elements are set out in Fairy Marine Drawing No: A 24598. I used this drawing to make up a set of tubular SS tripods. These are attached to the chainplates and allow the (shortened) main shrouds to keep the mast central while raising and lowering, by aligning the pivot point at the mast base with the tripod attachment to the main shrouds. The lower ends are attached to the main and aft shroud chainplates) and are weld joined between with two flat sections of 3mm SS straps; (Fairey specified 2" x 3/16").

Below are photos of the tripods I made using the Fairey drawing specifications, The stainless tubing used is 18mm x 2mm (Fairey specified ¾" mild steel).

NB When finalising the tripod height it is very important before welding the assembly to be sure that the port and starboard holes align through the mast base pivot. I used a builders 1 metre level and straight timber length to be sure. It is likely that





there will be some slight difference in the required height between port and star-board.

The only other elements required for the tripods are two sets of link plates - attaching the main shrouds to the tripods - to facilitate the mast rotation.

Other Kit required

A spinnaker pole - attached between the eye at the base of the mast and foot of the forestay (using a shackle) - see above.

Mainsheet tackle – attached to foredeck forestay deck fitting (or bow roller) and base of forestay attached to spinnaker pole or alternatively, a winch on the trailer as shown in the photos.



To aid handling the mast in the lowered position (i.e. resting on the mainsheet horse), a roller for the mast to rest on is very useful – Photo Fig 7 (Richard Hall (Aquila) has an article on the construction of his mast roller – using a plastic wheelbarrow wheel (I used a plastic trailer wheel for mine). The wheel is mounted on an axle through two wood cheeks and opposing cheeks below to mount on the horse.

The only other kit required is a length of rope (e.g. a sheet, halyard or warp) to attach as follows:

- When raising / lowering, attach the length of rope from the forestay/spinnaker pole attachment to the top of each tripod /shroud – provides a second control to keep the pole centred during the lifting/lowering.
- When mast is lowered onto the mainsheet horse - before removing the retaining pivot bolt (securing the mast to the deck), take the (previous) rope from tripods and pole and pass it through the eye at the base of the mast and each end back to the sheet winches either side of the cockpit.
- The rope arrangement around the mast base and sheet is also useful when moving the mast back into position for raising, allowing a controlled movement of the foot of the mast with downward pressure to offset the see-saw effect of the mast weight once it is raised.

The horse can be used in the deck or raised positions; if using the raised position, the horse needs to be made secure – suggest: bolted through the deck end instead of clevis pins – you may also opt to add a couple of lanyards to further prevent movement in the raised position.

Preparing to raise or lower the mast

- One end of the spinnaker pole is attached to the mast base eye – the other to end of the forestay and rope attached from the forestay end of the pole to the main shroud /tripods as noted above.
- Mainsheet method: the mainsheet (free end) is attached to the base of the forestay and at the deck end with a shackle. This enables the raising or lowering of the mast under control by means of the cam cleat.



- Trailer winch method: trailer winch cable passed over bow roller and attached to end of forestay. Mast is raised/lowered under control of winch ratchet/pawl (depends on type of winch).



Take up the slack on the winches so the mast is held securely as now there is more weight at the aft end. This causes upward pressure at the mast foot / step and with any tension from the main shrouds will make removal of the bolt difficult and potentially dangerous with the mast base liable to jump up and forward – the rope keeps everything under control allowing the mast to be moved into a stowed position by slowly releasing the tension from the winches. Likewise, when raising the mast, it can be moved into position using this method to reinsert the bolt through the mast step.

Final notes:

I have mostly used my trailer with its incorporated winch, but this year I had to drop the mast while afloat on the mooring for a lift out with my local yacht club.



I found the mainsheet method equally straightforward and had no issues lowering and stowing the mast using the horse in raised position. I prefer the raised position which also allows the use of the cockpit tent and makes for easier moving about the deck and below the boat. But if trailering the boat from the water any distance, the lowered horse position is obviously required.

It started so well!

Greg Manning A142 Sugar Plum

Sugar Plum was not launched for two years due to being laid up for major maintenance and then missed a year during Covid. Other than that I have launched and recovered her every year for the past twenty four years using the same trailer.

I have been lucky enough to have had help from my previous co-owner Roy or a friend Stevie. Having learnt from experience this is now a very slick procedure organised down to the last tie wrap and piece of locking wire!



My Son is an offshore helicopter pilot flying in Australia and comes over to Oslo twice a year for simulator training and has the opportunity to take leave for a family visit in the UK. As he was to be here in May this year it was planned to launch Sugar Plum earlier than usual so we could have the chance of a sail together.

Roy was able to help so on the 7th of May we set off for the one hundred and sixty five mile drive to Arisaig from Aberdeenshire. There are two possible routes and both have their problems. Although all on A roads often the metalled surface has a drop into a deep rut on the edge, there are some bridge parapets that are so close to the road that there is minimal clearance, in some places the total width is less than two lanes, some places are very windy with poor visibility and all sections are heavily trafficked with HGVs. It is a stressful six hours driving often grinding up hills in second gear. The good news is that my Landrover had overdrive which can be used to split the gears.

We arrived at Arisaig in the evening giving time to fit the rudder blade before turning in. Launch day went well. Duncan at Arisaig Marine has worked their teleporter to launch Sugar Plum for many years. Ten minutes to lift the mast off and lay it aside, forty minutes for Roy and I to rig the mast, fifteen minutes for Duncan to lift Sugar Plum off her trailer and using her internal sling to lower her into the water from a tidal quay and then fifteen minutes to step the mast. Fifteen minutes for Roy and I to load the ground tackle before starting the motor and taking her to her mooring. It all went like clockwork and after a cup of tea we set off for the drive home.

I had chosen the shortest route home via the A86, Newtonmoor and Grantown which has some very narrow sections of road and I do have to keep reminding myself that

I have an empty trailer in tow. At Roy-bridge a Jaguar XJS pulled in behind me followed by a Landrover Discovery Sport and they showed no sign of overtaking. On a narrow section of road two ladies were leaning on the crash barrier on the right hand side of the road taking pictures of Loch Laggan. A van coming the other way pulled out to pass them leaving me no room to pass so I had to stop in the road.

While I was stopped and changing gear into first and disengaging the overdrive there was a loud bang, surprisingly I didn't feel very much from the impact of the XJS hitting the rear of my trailer.

The ladies and the van quickly left the scene as I surveyed the damage. The back of the trailer was a mess, the towing drop plate on the Landrover was bent forward and the trailer coupling jammed so it couldn't be released. I had to use my three ton hydraulic bottle jack to drive the bent drawbar pins out to release the trailer and then politely exchanged details with the XJS driver who was taking it to the auction to sell and it was his wife following in the Discovery to run him home.

I drove the one hundred miles home and immediately drove my wife's Freelander back to collect the damaged trailer. Do not tell the gentlemen of the law about having no lights indicators or number plate!



The next morning I phoned my insurance company NFU Mutual to notify them of the accident, they told me that they would handle the claim from the other party, my NCD would not be affected, I would not have to pay the excess and they would manage the whole claim on my behalf. Later in the day the other party's insurance company LV advised me that they would take all responsibility and the claim, I advised them that the NFU were already handling it. I advised them that I would need the trailer and Landrover repaired and available during the first week in September to bring Sugar Plum home.

A couple of weeks later I was asked to take the Landrover to a body repair shop in Aberdeen. It was clear that they had no idea how to repair a twenty one year old Landrover. This was confirmed when after another two weeks an engineer visited. He advised that the body shop planned to take the body off the chassis to complete the work and that this could result in a cost overrun - I suggested that they use a Landrover Specialist not a body shop. I was left to get a quote for the insurance company to consider. All three Landover Specialist in the area were prepared to do the work but not give an estimate. I ended up with a verbal quote of £4,000 from my local Landrover Specialist. I had every confidence they knew exactly how to carry out the repair. I told my insurance company that I would get the repair done and send them the bill. That didn't go down well! After much delay the repair was complete at £3,232. Eventually the insurance company did refund the money and I was happy.



A few days after the accident I obtained a quote for a replacement trailer from RM Trailers who made the original. They have the original Fairey plans. Ouch - the quote was about £6,500! I was concerned that the insurance company would prefer to repair the damage. Whilst the metal work would be straight forward re-galvanizing the repaired areas would not be. I would also not be happy that unidentified stress damage had affected other welded joints.

After three weeks my insurance company advised me that they were not prepared to deal with the trailer as they had a limit of £1,000 for trailers. I had to start a new claim from the other party's insurance company. I was beginning to see that time was running out for recovering Sugar Plum in early September. To my surprise after some delay they agreed not only to replace the trailer but required a quote for delivery even though I had suggested I would collect it at only the cost to myself. A chunky cheque appeared through the post.

By the time I placed the order the manufacturer had been bought out by another company and moved their trailer manufacturing from Hampshire to Suffolk which resulted in manufacturing delays. To give what I thought was adequate time I planned to lift Sugar Plum out on Wednesday the 24th of September because the tide was right, Roy was available and the yard were geared up for lifting boats out. On the preceding Thursday I was advised that the trailer was ready and that the production manager would deliver it to me himself. I heard nothing on Friday or over the weekend but I did use the time loading the Landrover with all the tackle needed for the lift out.

Monday morning I got a phone call, he would be leaving Suffolk at 12:30 and he would advise when leaving. By 2pm nothing but eventually a text that he would be leaving at 2:30pm. I planned to meet half way at Tebay Truck Stop in Cumbria so set off in my wife's Freelander. At 4:30pm I received another text, he was just leaving so I suggested I cross the Pennines to Scotch Corner to shorten his journey and make the best use of time. The whole of UK was being affected by very heavy rain and poor driving conditions. We met at 8:20pm and I set off northward. I know all the cross border roads but very stupidly followed the satnav using the A68, the worse route I could have chosen! After fog, heavy rain, road closures and diversion I arrived home at 03:30am on the Tuesday.

I did get a few hours sleep. Luckily I was early, checked the trailer hooked up to the Landrover as many of the bulbs had not survived the long journey through the night being bounced about on the empty trailer! I picked Roy up at 2pm and drove to Arisaig arriving with enough daylight left to do some of the pre-lift jobs while Roy cooked a meal. I slept rather well that night.

The lift out went like clockwork and the six hour drive home was uneventful. The new trailer towed well.



My whole summer had been dominated by the hassle of dealing with insurance companies and managing the repair of the Landrover and the replacement for my trailer. Contrary to their initial statement the insurance company had made no constructive input to the whole affair.

What of the damaged trailer? The insurance company said they had no interest in it. I would not have been happy to trust its structural integrity for the type of extended journeys I do but with the metal work repairs it was perfectly usable. My local blacksmith quoted £400 to make good the damage so I offered it on the AOA website but there were no takers. I put it in the local plant, machinery and trailer auction thinking it could be repurposed.

After it was too late to withdraw it Trefor with Amber Ellen on Arran wanted it. The only way for him to get it at this stage was for him to bid for it on line which he did. He paid a little more than my blacksmith had quoted for the repair. I picked up the trailer and had the repair done and with a little cash adjustment to cover the difference between what I received from the auction and the repair cost, it is now having a new life on Arran.

Lessons learnt; none except sometime life deals one an unfair hand!



Amber Ellen with her 'new' trailer

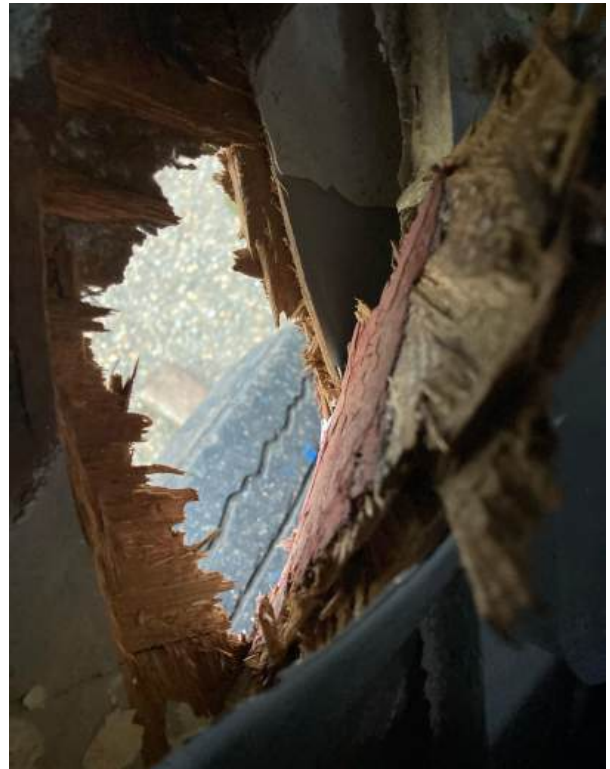
Getting Chamois Off the Road and Onto The Water

James Shacklock A147

As many of you know before Chamois was donated to me by George Ward in early 2024. Whilst towing her down from Scotland to Southampton she had suffered damage in a crash that closed the A34 for 2 hours. She had been in George's family for just under 50 years and had been in very good condition and had been used every year for some rugged adventures on the West Coast of Scotland.

After the accident, she had a hole right through the hull on the starboard side above and below the waterline. She also had some dents in the port side and a stringer had come loose, a bent furling stay and damage to the stem. I was in the crash and while relieved to see that nobody was hurt, it was sad to see such a loved boat in that state.

This summer I have had the task of getting her watertight, structurally sound and back on the water. I have very little experience of boat repairs, especially one so important. I was lucky that I was now a member of a helpful sailing club only 10 minutes from my house with yard space, launching facilities and a well equipped workshop - Netley Cliff Sailing Club on Southampton Water. The sailing club already had enough broken boats on site so I was conscious that there was a chance that they could at some point soon lose patience with me. However, they were very excited about having a historic boat at the club and were looking forward to seeing her afloat.



I have 3 teenage sons that had always wanted access to a yacht but they were daunted by the amount of work involved and worried if it could be achievable. Things moved very slowly for the next few months but by the end of the summer holidays some help arrived. George made the long journey down from Perthshire to visit the boat for the first time since the accident. It was a long trip for him but on our first day we managed to pick away at and uncover the bow. We found the damage to not be as bad as first feared. Ian managed to get the trailer fully repaired and reunited with the boat in Southampton and just before the weather turned bad this autumn he travelled down for 3



mammoth workday sessions from sunrise to working late under torchlight. The scary hole in the starboard is now repaired and painted over on both sides and while there is still a lot more to do on the stem, Chamois can be ready for a water test before Christmas.

The most encouraging part is that the repair work has, as Ian had said it would, actually proved enjoyable. This has been especially the case for the children and the youngest has been busy practising with the materials on model versions. My sons are in a sea scout group based at the same sailing club and the other scouts are now taking an interest. They want to be involved in learning the hull repairs and the engine maintenance. The sailing club committee are following progress and have said that they would welcome more visits from Atalantas. In mid-November, to celebrate the hole being repaired, we allowed the main cabin to be temporarily turned from a workshop back into a liveable space so we could cook and eat our first meal on her. On that evening we were able to imagine how much more fun it would be on the water.

There is lot of hope now and the mission is to now make the most of this motivation and energy. Hopefully some even more encouraging developments soon.

Developing the Fairey Atalanta

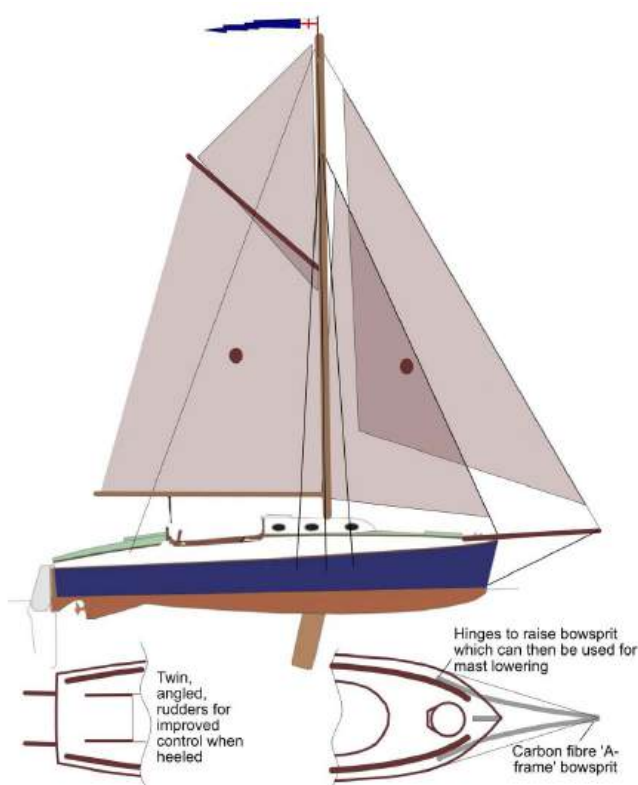
Nick Philips

Through the years there have been many ideas for how the Atalanta might be developed. The idea of building in fibreglass has come up many times and there was even a poll of members for interest the idea (see the [1984-85 Bulletin](#)). The idea has many attractions; all the amazing features of the Atalanta without any of the maintenance.

Owners have put other ideas into practice. For example twin rudders (A102, A146), vertically lifting rudders (A15, A45, A87, A89, A132, A138, A146, A166, A177, T4), raising the aft deck to increase comfort in the aft cabin (A15), removal of the aft deck to make a second cockpit for fishing (A8), fixed bilge keels instead of lifting (A170, A31-12).

But a theme which has always captured my imagination has been 'enhancing' the rig. A common idea has been to increase the sail area for better light air performance, perhaps through a taller mast and/or a bowsprit. Then there is the possibility of reducing weight aloft using carbon fibre spars and Dyneema standing and running rigging. And Mike Dixon and I have often mused about fitting a gaff rig; not just for performance but for character and, yes, because it would be an interesting challenge.

So in April I asked the folks in the Fairey Atalanta Experimental Research Yurt to take a look. **What follows is a product of their imagination. The ideas are not official AOA guidance. Please don't try this at home without a responsible boatyard present.**



Gaff Rig

They think that gaff rig might give us the chance to combine all of the rig ideas above – better light air performance, use of Dyneema and carbon fibre spars for lightness, loads of challenge and character! They suggest starting with a three-quarter rig and think the same mast and stays could be used with both the original Bermudan sails and their gaff sail plan. They suggested an aluminium mast as the luff groove would be strong enough for the gaff to slide up and down in the groove. I would prefer a wooden mast but this would be difficult to use for both Ber-

mudan and Gaff rigs. A carbon fibre mast with a luff groove would significantly reduce weight aloft but would be very expensive.

The lowers and forestay hounds for the Bermudan mast would be used for the staysail, set on the forestay to the bow, and a second stay would be fitted from the masthead to the end of the bowsprit. A custom masthead fitting would be required. Twin backstays would be fitted from the custom fitting and arranged with tackles at their lower end. These could be led to the existing chainplates on the transom for Bermudan rig. For the Gaff rig the tackles would enable them to work as 'runners' fitted to new chain plates on the curved decks just aft of the cockpit.

They proposed the bowsprit would be a lightweight 'A-frame' design with hinges where the legs attach to the forward curved deck on each bow. This would allow it to be raised to save fees in marinas. It could also be used in a raised position to pull up and lower the mast. Their initial sail plan suggests (Bermudan areas in brackets):

Mainsail 178 sq.ft (155)

Topsail 46 sq.ft

Staysail 78 sq.ft (85-115)

Yankee 126 sq.ft

The total of around 428 sq. is an increase of over 50% to the sail area for that light airs performance but they would want to do more work on relative sizes of main and headsails to maintain balance. It might be that the boom and gaff will need to be reduced in length. Deciding on the best selection of sails and reefs for different conditions will require some experimentation. The team also suggested thinking about using a boat with twin rudders to provide greater control when heeled and in strong winds given the large increase in sail area. And they had an idea to fit water ballast tanks outboard of the

keelboxes which can be filled and emptied depending on conditions.

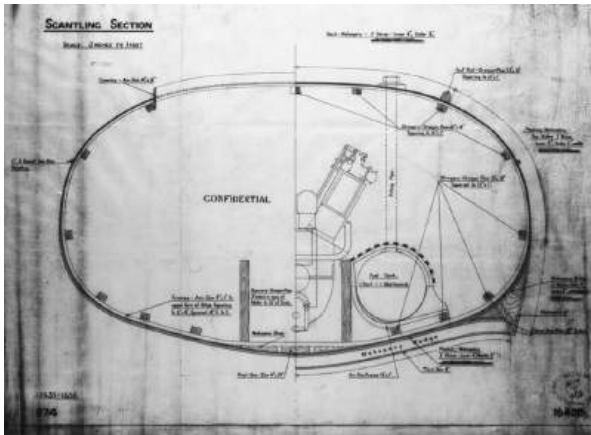


Junk Rig Although not part of the brief the FAERY team decided to also evaluate Junk rig. The un-stayed mast of the Junk would mean structural alterations. The unstayed mast would be positioned just after of the forepeak bulkhead and would require a carbon fibre 'space frame' to spread the rig loads into the structure and skin in that area. They noted that these alterations would fly in the face of one of the cleverest design features – the concentration of mast and keel stresses around the sloping bulkhead. They would also require work to deal with the trim change from moving the mast forward.

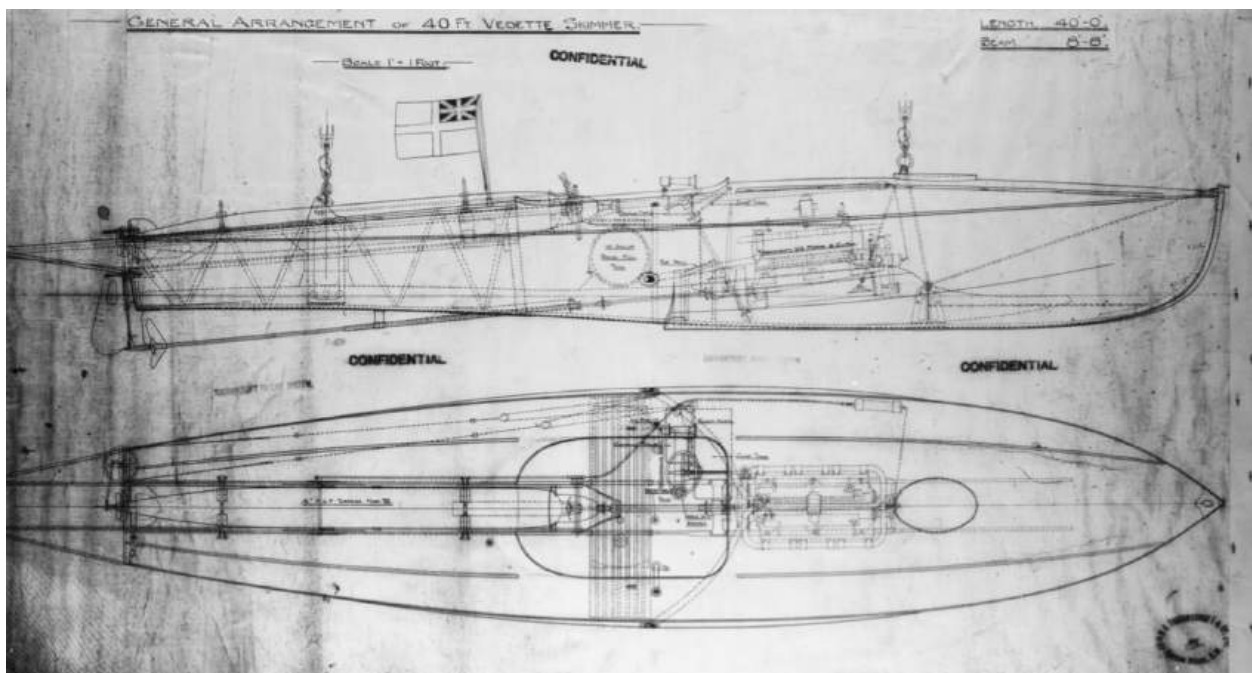
Coastal Motor Boat CMB4R

Nick Philips

The Coastal Motor Boat in Boathouse 4 caught our attention for the visual similarities to the Atalanta. The similarities are probably driven by the laws of hydrodynamics and strength in wooden boats: the egg-like 'ring' sections, water and wind shedding



curved decks, narrow hull....The story of the Coastal Motor Boats in the First World War is fascinating. You can read about it on the BBC website search for 'Spitfires of the Seas'



The Boathouse 4 team have built a fully operational reproduction of a 40ft CMB. She was built entirely by volunteers, guided by experienced boatbuilding professionals. They used the same techniques that would have been deployed in 1916 albeit with modern glues. They called the new boat CMB4R. CMB4, an original Coastal Motor Boat, is housed in the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. Search 'CMBR 4' on the nationalhistoricships.org.uk website.



First Cruise on A183 Bluster

Jonathan Stearn

A183 Bluster was bought by my parents, Jane and Ted Stearn in, I think, 1972. They were looking for a more seaworthy yacht to replace the 23' Magyar that they owned previously. Although her pine woodwork was beautiful, she proved not to be as seaworthy as desired, having been designed more for sailing on Hungarian lakes. After considering many different classes of yachts and visiting boatyards full of ancient wooden boats with rusting Stuart Turner engines, Bluster was bought from a yard which was selling the boat due to non-payment of bills by its former owner. Unfortunately, this meant that the yard had stripped it of some items of value, including its Brooks and Gatehouse instruments.

After some work on the boat at home in Leicestershire, she was launched in the Deben at Woodbridge and taken down to her mooring at Ramsholt. For some reason, probably because my father could not leave the collage he ran in the middle of a term, I got to sail Bluster on her first cruise. This was very trusting of my parents! Her log book records the details of my "Post-Exam Cruise" and the crew: a fellow member of the Liverpool University Royal Naval Unit and my girlfriend of the time.

Thursday 14th June 1973.

1915 *Join Ship (at Ramsholt on the river Deben, in Suffolk).*

Friday 15th June

0740 *Slip mooring, proceed up river under sail.*

0930 *Pick up mooring at Woodbridge.*

We "victualled ship" and then returned to Ramsholt under power, picking up the mooring again at 1330. This trip to Woodbridge acted as a shakedown cruise and let us get to know the boat.

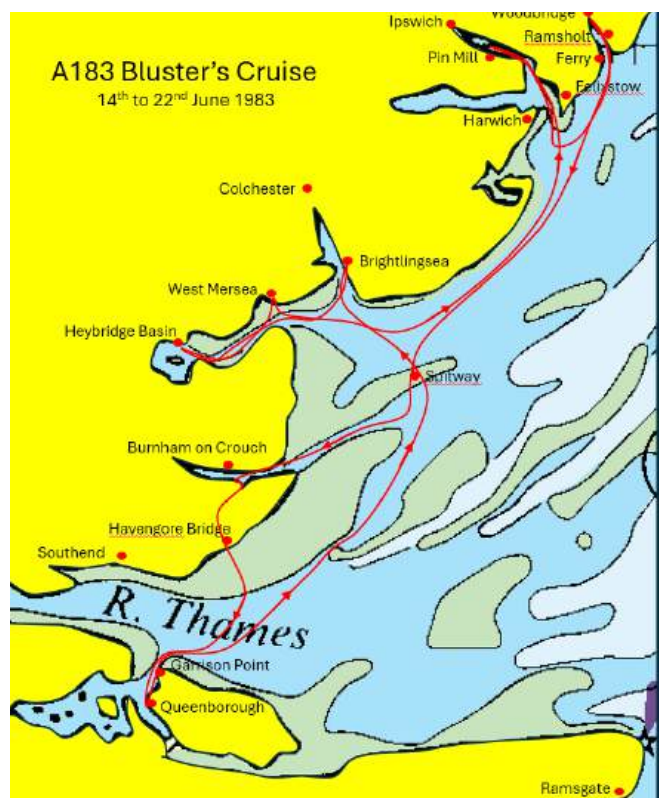
Saturday 16th June

0740 *Slip mooring, beat down to ferry (Felixstow Ferry).*

0915 *Start engine in Ferry moorings.*

0935 *Engine cut out, beat out over bar.*

I do not remember this episode. The river is



line. What I do remember, is that when we got to sea and it became a bit choppy, we discovered quite a bit of water coming into the engine compartment. After spending some time with my head poking down by the engine, I found that it was coming in via two small holes at the aft ends of the keel boxes which had not been covered when the cockpit deck had been raised to accommodate the engine. Some rags stuffed in the holes solved that problem. The lack of log entries on this event was probably explained by my feeling rather seasick after fixing the leak.

1035 *Pass Cork Spit Buoy.*

1125 *Pass Medusa Buoy.*

1330 *Pass Wallet Spitway. A/c 160°C, Proceed through Spitway.*

1345 *Pass Swin Spitway Buoy. A/c 244°C.*

1700 *Drop anchor North of moorings at Burnham (on Crouch).*

The Spitway is a shallow pass between the Buxey and Gunfleet sands; a key route from the Wallet to the Swin. The Gunfleet is now covered in large wind turbines, but in 1973 it was all just sea with the low coastline hardly visible. This was an eventful first day at sea, but the weather had been fine and we had successfully started our cruise.

Sunday 17th June

1000 *Weighed anchor, proceeded up Roach to Havengore.*

1145 *Drop anchor at Havengore Bridge.*

This is quite a fun passage, mostly over drying mud in narrow creeks, but navigable at high water. This area of the Essex marshes is mostly controlled by the military, with firing



ranges and ordinance testing and disposal. We did stick in the mud at one point and were told by a fisherman who appeared that we were on a horse. This confused me for a while until I remembered the Horse Sand on the Deben, a sandbank in the middle of the river just above Felixstow Ferry. But no problem, we just raised the keels a little further and sailed on. We anchored while waiting for the bridge to open.

1230 *Through Havengore Bridge to East Shoebury Bkn.*

We sailed over the Broomway, a raised road running down the Maplin Sands, and after clearing them and crossing the main Yantlet Channel up the Thames, entered the Medway Channel, Passed Garrison Point where my father had been initially stationed in the war, and then then up the Medway to Queenborough in the River Swale. The wind, WSW veering WNW Force 3-4, had again been favourable, or had we planned the voyage to suit the forecast weather?

We appear to have spent Monday seeing the sights of Queenborough. Possibly there was no wind, or it was in the wrong direction.

0340 *Weigh anchor. Proceed down Medway to sea.*

An early start, pity my crew, but in the Thames Estuary you must go with the tide! Again, the wind seems to have been favourable, if light: SE backing South 2-4. Our speed through the water at 0614 was recorded as 2.5 kn, but we would have had a strong tide with us. We crossed the Yantlet Channel, sailed up the Swin, through the Spitway and then dropped anchor half a cable North of the Bench Head Buoy at 10.15 for an hour and a quarter, presumably to await the flood tide to take us up the River Colne to Brightlingsea, which we reached at 1315. We secured alongside another boat between the piles. There were no pontoons there then.

Wednesday 20th June

0940 *Start engine, leave berth (under power).*
1040 *Stop engine. Wind NW 2.*

This day we sailed up to Heybridge Basin in the River Blackwater where we picked up a mooring at 1430. The log does not record what we did at Heybridge, but there is a good pub there! We slipped from the mooring at 1615 and sailed back down the Blackwater to the Mersea Quarters where we picked up another mooring well inside the Quarters. This spot is well sheltered from the **sea by a mudbank, just down river from West Mersea.**

Thursday 21st June

1240 *Slip mooring, proceed out of Blackwater.*

The wind was initially NW Force 1, it veered to ESE and then backed again to NE, in-



creasing to Force 4, but variable. Our destination was the river Orwell, and a NE wind is not ideal for sailing up the Wallet. A lot of tacking was involved, but we passed the Languard buoy off Felixstow at 2000 and anchored at Pin Mill at 2300. Too late for the pub, but there were probably acres of mud between us and it anyway.

Friday 22nd June

The last day of our cruise. We departed Pin Mill at 0845, beat up to the Deben entrance in an Easterly Force 3 and crossed the bar at 1315. Our mooring off Ramsholt was picked up at 1405.

All in all, it had been a good cruise. We had had a lot of fun and probably learned a lot too. The winds had not been too strong, and the weather had been fine (at least I did not record any rain or poor visibility). As parsimo-

had also not spent much on fuel or mooring fees. Bluster had performed well, and although we had found a problem that needed a more permanent repair, we had not damaged her.

Some thoughts

Navigating around the Thames Estuary, in strong tides and sometimes poor visibility, with an echo sounder, log, transistor radio (for weather forecasts) and an Aldis lamp, but no VHF radio or GPS was quite normal at the time, and proved to be very good training for my later sailing exploits. I do wonder how many yacht skippers (or drivers) would fare now if the satellites were jammed?

The RYA is in the process of modifying its Day Skipper course to put more emphasis on digital applications, which is good as most yacht skippers now use mobile phones and chart plotters for most of their passage planning and execution. Many do not even carry paper charts, and leisure chart plotters do not currently facilitate 'traditional' navigation techniques. I presume that the RYA will expect the traditional skills, of plotting DR and EP positions, and working out a course to steer allowing for tide and leeway, to still be taught, but if they are never practiced they will quickly be forgotten.

The MCA and other organisations are encouraging the marine electronics and charting industry to produce instruments and electronic charts that can be certified fit for navigating small (commercial) craft. However, progress has been slow, which is why the Hydrographic Office has postponed ceasing production of paper charts. Using our current navigation instruments and apps, which all say "Not to be used for navigation", is very helpful to us yacht skippers, but I would encourage everyone to have a Plan B, and the skill to put it into operation, in case the satellites do not work, the water gets in, or the battery runs out.



The Ore and Alde Rally Summer 2024

Ian Pollard F54 Blue Belle A31-4
Gellie

This year saw an opportunity to use the Fulmar, F54 Bluebelle, which was on a road trailer that we had restored 10 years ago with new Indespension units. I had managed to change the keel bolts and seals before giving it to my son Aidan, whilst living and working overseas and taking over the restoration of Gellie. The last sail we had was on Rutland water after the previous years journey to Lake Windermere. Unfortunately many years had passed and the decks were suffering from the weather. Perhaps a job for next year, better to take the opportunity to sail rather than wait for Epoxy to dry is my philosophy.

Aidan gave me Bluebelle back 2 years ago as he was struggling with the mooring fees.

One benefit was that he had reground the valves for the little Vetus inboard engine, but unfortunately his partner had discarded the valve seats and collets in an episode of tidying! Ah well, an opportunity to try out a greener, electric outboard. My ultimate aim was to attend the West Mersea Regatta in August. To launch into the river and re-familiarise myself with a boat I'd not been near for 8 years before going to sea, seemed like a good idea. I would take lots of tools and epoxy and repair as I went on.

A very useful East Coast Rivers pilot book and conversations with various members that lived near or had sailed around the area, pointed me in the direction of Aldeburgh. Upson's yard did a very good deal, £90 for the season. A proper old fashioned yard with a mast hoist, slipway, visitor moorings and parking for landrover and trailer, all included.. Three months for the price of two days on the south coast. Another benefit was the Aldeburgh yacht club, next to the boatyard, with really good facilities, good food, cheap



beer and warm showers, all with the amazing vista of the Alde's first big bend as it twists its way to Snape Maltings on one side or to the mouth of the Ore's final journey to the bar at Orford Haven.

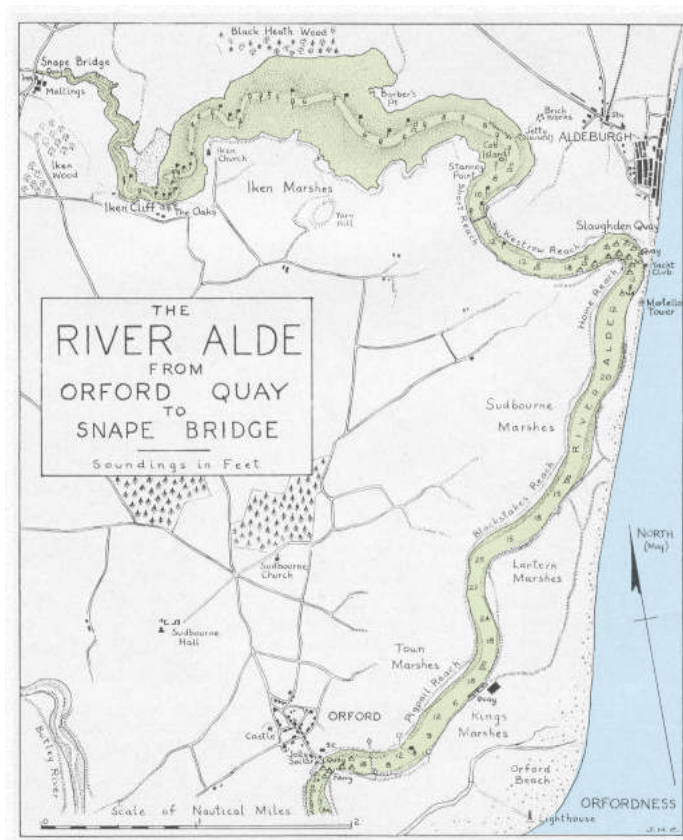
The downside was a 200 mile journey at 45 mph with the landrover. The old v8 returned 18 mpg on lpg, gone are the days of cheap trailer sailing... The bus service was surprisingly better than expected, although restricted to one bus to Lowestoft or Ipswich every hour before 6pm and a maximum of £2 per journey. Saxmundham was the nearest train station, with a senior railcard saver taking 4 hours and £30 to get back home to Wakefield.

Aldeburgh itself was a bustling tourist destination, lots of cafes, chip shops and pubs. There was a very useful Coop and Tesco express, although a good 20 minute walk away from the moorings, which were serviced by a free water bus to the yacht club pontoon in daylight hours, or the loan of a tender. Strangely there weren't many fuel stations available in convenient places in the area. The nearest was a 30 minute hike from Snape maltings.

During the season I did many short excursions along the rivers, challenged by wind and tide taking advantage of the anchor and testing the limits of sailing against the wind with keel raised. The Fulmar will sail in a foot, but even that wasn't enough as the water in Butley Creek and towards Snape Malting can be very scarce at times. Rather than give a day by day diarised account, I thought I'd opt for the highlights

Best sail

10nm from Aldeburgh to Orford, 2 hours with the falling tide. The tide runs at 4kts, 10 kts of wind on the beam for most of the journey,



although with a narrow twisting river there were many tacks at one point. Sunsetting over Radio Caroline masts were majical.

Most interesting place

Orford, with its well preserved castle and huge, now landlocked harbour and wharf. The smoked salmon at Pinneys restaurant, freshly baked bread from the small village store. A village that time forgot. Well worth a visit, I stayed there on 3 seperate occasions, both on the swinging moorings and sheltering from Storm Lilian on the yacht club pontoon, after failing to get to the swinging mooring, a downside of the feeble electric motor, or perhaps lack of charge in the battery.

Favourite anchorage

Buttley Creek, well sheltered and perfect for our shallow draughting Fairies. Always good to get astonished looks from the Wayfarers as you sail past them and the Oyster beds and anchoring in a trickle. Another favourite was Iken Cliff on the way to Snape Malting, overlooked by St Bitolph's church. Taken there out of neccessity when faced with a lack of light,





With only the owls and waterfowl for company, I really could imagine life in the early Saxon period.

Most tricky passage

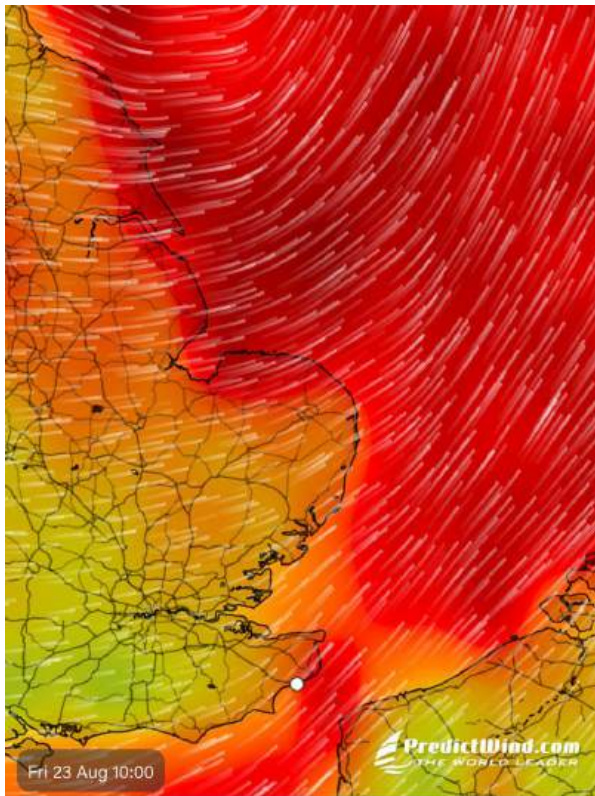
From Orford to Snape Malting and the site of the awesome music venue converted by celebrated composer, Benjamin Britten. The channel is tortuous, shallow and very twisty, marked by withies - basically old milk cartons on thin branches, difficult to see against the light, impossible to see in twilight and often not even there! With the lack of motorised propulsion the journey took two days. Running out of daylight after the game of enough keel to sail, but too much for the depth of water, how I envied those helmsmen with crew testing depths every few feet followed by shouts of “right a bit” or “stop!” Single handed on a Fairey requires long arms to enable keel winding with one arm whilst the other changes the jib sheets whilst holding a steady course. After 30 years I am still

practising. I have sailed the straights of Hormuz, raced in the Gulf of Arabia, but that 20 mile journey to Snape Malting was the most exacting for me. Well worth the effort, surrounded by nature’s finest, photo opportunities at every turn. I actually moored at Snape for 10 days as there was lots to see and do, coastal footpaths, thatched cottages and to be fair I didn’t relish the return journey.

Most exhilarating

From Aldeburgh to Orford it is a pleasant 10nm, with a further 5nm to the bar, only slowing down to navigate the many moored boats around the bend at Orford. I passed Orford around 6 times over the summer, it became most inviting as opposed to the ferocious winds from Storm Lilian.





Having to wait her out against the onslaught, I had to postpone the journey to the Regatta. Spending 2 nights lashed against the pontoon, constantly adjusting springs and fenders to protect against the buffeting and out of kilter movements of both boat and exposed pontoon. Always difficult when you're not in control, if only I had sought shelter onto the swinging mooring with sheltered bank earlier. Such a contrast to the downwind passage with 20 knt wind with the flood giving a pleasant fast sail down to the bar. Both sails out in that sweet spot of balance.....





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