



# VAGB

## NEWSLETTER

### 36



Southern Comfort

## Vega Association of Great Britain

January 2004

Webpage - [www.albinvega.co.uk](http://www.albinvega.co.uk)

### Letter from the Secretary Bird

Hello fellow Vega Sailors and friends, Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you are now on the road to recovery after the Christmas puddings and the "silly season", and now that we have turned the corner into 2004, Spring is on the horizon, and more attention can be turned to "her outdoors". Last summer's cruise as far as I was concerned was a non event and I ventured no further than my home waters. My son was married in Canada in mid summer, followed by another wedding shortly afterwards in U.S.A., so those two events knocked my sailing plans into oblivion. However, whilst sitting on a ferry which was crossing Lake Champlain, very close to the borders of both Canada and U.S.A. on a brusque windy afternoon. What did I see..... a Vega, V1851, dark blue hull and in spanking condition. She was beating to windward and passed close by the ferry, with a bone in her teeth. I was able to note her sail number, but with out binoculars I could not see her name. When I returned, Steve did some searching on the www and I received six replies on that magic machine from six Vega owners on and near Lake Champlain. It is really amazing, the Vega "family" is everywhere. Isn't that great to know. I arrived back home in time for the Laying -Up Dinner, which again has proved to be our most popular event, with all our old supporters and some new ones as well. However unfortunately none of our prize winners were there to collect their silver ware. The Ken Vasey Trophy was won by Barry Shurlock, V "Iserl" "The Ferry only goes to Roscoff", The Secretary's Plate was awarded to John and Ted Trim, V "Blue Bar" "Saving Vega 1210", and the best overseas contribution to the Newsletter "The Kugellager Incident" was awarded to Arne Heinrich, a very stalwart supporter of VAGB.

2004 is IFR year again. For new members the International Friendship Regatta. It is being held at Marstrand in Sweden from July 26th to 31st. Only one boat will represent VAGB this time. V "Jenavive" skippered by our chairman Mike Freeman. However quite a few VAGB members, including myself will be going by other means of transport. As I do not have the time to sail "Bugle" there this summer, I am crewing with Lars Lemby and helping him to get her back to Stockholm after the event. Mike was looking for crew to help him bring "Jenavive" home. If you are interested contact him at: [mike@albinvega.com](mailto:mike@albinvega.com)

Our next event will be the AGM and the Fitting- Out Lunch on March 6th 11.30 AGM followed by lunch at 13.30, at the Banstead Downs Golf Club, Burdon Lane, Belmont/Cheam, Surrey. I hope that you can make it.

Lastly, if you are looking to change where you keep your boat ,my club The Hundred of Hoo which has five resident Vegas, and is situated on the banks of the Medway, has a few vacancies, due to natural causes. The main assets that we offer are , some deep water moorings, but mostly half tide moorings, a secure site for storage and parking. Storage of boats via a slip where boats are hauled out on owners trailers. Any amount of DIY on site. We have all sorts of boats, traditional wooden boats, motor, sailing, fishing, dinghies,row boats, luggers, smacks and bawleys. Our best asset is that we are the friendliest and most helpful club on the river, with members with the skills that go with the variety of craft, some of them dying trades. We do winter storage if you have your own trailer with steerable front wheels, If you dont have one, we will help you find one, or even get one built. We are also one of the most competitively priced clubs on the river, if not in the land. Come and visit us,(weekends or Tues. & Thurs) or contact the club 01634 250102, if you are interested. Or contact Mike Freeman or me via VAGB. We are both members and will be delighted to tell you more. Meanwhile fellow vega owners , I wish you success in fitting out, and a good sailing season wherever you sail.

**Cheerio,Diana V 1698 " Bugle "**

### **New Members (July 2003 - Dec 2003)**

Rob de Koning  
V 2151 " Babs "  
Lake Baciaton  
Hungary

Victoria GreeningSteve Horobin  
V 1279 " Vegabond "  
Port Edgar  
Firth of Forth, Scotland

David Young  
V 1722 " Coranto "  
Killyleagh  
N. Ireland

John Jones  
V 1750 " Billy Ruffin "  
Portsmouth  
Solent

Des and Norma Nixon  
V 753 " Boyo 2 "  
East Antrim  
N.Ireland

Ian Dunlop  
V 1697 " Xino Xano  
ex- "Notyarc"  
Portsmouth, Solent

John Pennington  
V 1847 " Te Arawa "  
Lowestoft  
E.Coast

Hugh Joseph Byers  
V 3255 " Seastar "  
Portaferry  
N. Ireland

Dominic O'Flynn  
V 3244 " Svengala 2 "  
ex- " Velgia "  
Baltimore, Ireland

Alan Critchlow  
V 1639 " Voila "  
ex - Tarka the Otter  
Montreal, Canada

Gordon Haynes  
V 1731 " Mistress "  
Lake Windermere  
Cumbria

Dr. Andrew Lendrum  
V\*\*\*\* " Lintie "  
Isle of Luing  
West Coast Scotland

Paul Jefferies and Sharon  
V 1792 " Viking "  
Blackwater Marina  
E. Coast

Don Boadella  
Looking for a Vega  
Schull  
S.W. Ireland

Roger Smith  
V 1793 " Dragoon "  
Titmarsh Marina  
Essex, E.Coast

Robert Bishop  
V 2002 " Alcyon "  
Halifax  
Nova Scotia, Canada

Henrike Fedeler  
V 1478 " Hetaire 2 "  
Fareham  
Solent

# The Importance Of a Passage Plan

When we are thinking of going sailing often our first thoughts are that we need to get away from the endless paperwork, routine and indeed planning. We want our free spirit to run wild, for me certainly these are very motivating factors. Given that we spend time, money and effort on our boats in order to enjoy our time afloat we do want our sail to go smoothly and without a major incident. Clearly the sailing life brings a certain degree of incidents because that is life afloat, however, some prior planning, often in the comfort of a favourite armchair will give up more awareness and warning of what is to come.

Sailing in the UK waters requires that we must understand what the tide is going to do to us during a passage. We need not only tidal height to know if we can leave and arrive safely but we must also consider tidal streams to estimate our journey time and indeed if it possible to do at all.

So we start with pouring over charts and considering our route, avoiding hazards along the way and using a variety of marks to guide us. We must consider when we will know to change direction, and angle on an object may give us this. Can we get good position fixes on route and what shipping might we expect and do any special rules apply. On deciding upon a general route then consider tidal strategy. The time we set off could be curtail to not doubling the time it will take us to arrive. We will want to take full advantage of a favourable tide. I have learned in life there is no point fighting with nature; it is simply far better to go with the flow!

When considering our tides we can use tidal diamonds, tidal chartlets, and tidal atlas and passage notes in almanacs and pilots. The more information we have the greater the chance of a good strategy. Remember prior planning and preparation is the key. Don't forget that during the different states of the tide, streams have different strengths.

Sailors have to work with two elements the tide and the wind. If the wind is against the tide the Sea State will be considerably worse than that of the elements going in the same direction. As a minimum one should get an area forecast from the met office by listening to radio 4, looking at teletext or any other means. Remember to check the direction of wind with not only your intended route but also the set (direction) of the tide.

With regard to your sails apparent wind and true wind are different. If we sail up wind we increase our apparent wind where as to sail down wind we decrease it; it is therefore quite respectable to have two or three routes available for different wind directions. Crashing to windward for an experienced crew can be a lot of fun, but for a novice short handed crew it can be the making of an epic. If when you are out the weather worsens or you have problems never be afraid to shorten you passage to a nearer harbour. Just because you planned this voyage don't expect everyone to brave it out, this is not an insurance test. Be prepared to compromise and allow some discussion. However don't take a chance on a risky harbour entrance because you are tired. Use your judgement and consider before you leave your refuge harbours and there approaches with tides and wind in mind.

Finally check your boat and equipment. It is true that a boat is never ready but something's are not negotiable, for example your engine and VHF. Talk to the crew before leaving about safety. Never assume crew know what to do, including experienced ones but make briefings friendly and relaxed. The sure sign of a skipper who is out of their depth is one who is shouting and stressed. This will not inspire confidence and usually makes matters much worse. A happy crew will volunteer for work a press ganged one will not.

So instead of television, skim over some charts, almanacs and pilots during the winter and have a bash at some passage plans. I guarantee come next season you will be more confident, competent and happy.

**Keith Patrick - Vega "Rough Diamond" - (Vega Ventures)**

## **VEGA VENTURES**

**Vega Ventures is a Scottish based company offering sailing holidays on the Albin Vega "Rough Diamond", touring the West Coast of Scotland. We are offering a wide range of holidays to suit everyone. From sailing tuition or a relaxing holiday round the stunning Islands or if you prefer a tipple then perhaps our whisky tours may be more your thing. There is something for everyone! For more information contact Keith Patrick on 01683 220207 or contact us via our website [www.vegaventures.co.uk](http://www.vegaventures.co.uk).**



**Rough Diamond - Near Seil Island**

## VAGB LETTERS & EMAILS

Dear Diana

Many thanks for your kind letter of the 18th. Yes, I am sorry to have to give up sailing after some 75 yeras, on and off, of sailing. Although I have to admit that during that time I did nothing earth shattering, preferring to regard myself more as a potterer who enjoyed boat handling rather than racing or long distance sailing.

Both my crusing yachts were designed by Per Brohall, and, in my opinion, are exceptionally fine and satisfying cruising boats.

I hope to remain a member of VAGB, but the prospective (subject to survey) new owner of Vegabond is hoping to take her out to the Mediterranean. Nevertheless I shall endeavour to make him aware of the advantages of VAGB membership. My very best wishes to you and all those involved with the production of the Newsletter.

Kind Regards **Peter Humphreys**

## Email to VAGB

Hi Steve,

Thanks so much for your reply. As many boat owners my Vega is remote from my computer. Having read both the MD6a manual and the Vega handbook the image of the male filter was burned into my mind. I was so certain that the original type filter was on the boat that I questioned the previous owners commitment to maintenance.... sadness and disappointment for me, also complications.

I returned to the boat this week-end contemplating what my options were on the oil filter question. I decided I would have to have the filter in hand before choosing the right course of action. When I removed the cockpit floor I was both surprised and relieved to discover a white female Volvo oil filter where I has assumed the green male would be! Such are the mischievios games my eyes have played with me for decades. I commend you for your work with the British Vega Group.

I assume that your wife (means Diana!!) was here (Montreal) recently. If the weather was anything like it is in the UK I must apologise. July is usually the hottest month here..... She should have enjoyed (endured?) the tropical heat and humidity that are usual for this period. This year other than the absence of British citizens she might have thought that she was still in the UK. ( and it is said the weather and cuisine are the pillars of culture, a stomache full of good food and wine; a clear blue sky and a warm wind blowing in off the Adriatic. That is the stuff of poetry and music. Or, a warm fire and a full mug at the local pub..... oh well)

Best Regards **Antonio**

# Yahoo Group - Albin Vega

Hello All:

The summer is almost gone, but, finally the problem with my Volvo MD6A has been found and cured. I said I would post my findings, so here I am with what I have learned.

The problem manifested itself in the following way: The engine would start very easily, as it has since I bought VESPER (V 1868) about six years ago. After starting, it would idle quite smoothly. BUT, when I would apply power, it would accelerate nicely and run for about 30 seconds, then, without me touching anything, the engine would slow to about idle speed, and stay there for about five seconds, while coughing out a cloud of grayish smoke. Now, after this slow period it would emit very black smoke while accelerating to the designated RPM. The damn thing would continue (speed up, slow down, speed up, slow down) this way indefinitely, without me touching anything!

Now, here's all that I did while "troubleshooting." Since the problem seemed to be fuel-related, I changed all filters (again), I pulled (and had professionally overhauled) the fuel injectors, (I can answer anybody's questions on this if anybody has any) and I had the injector pump overhauled (this was \$435.00 all by itself). After all these things, reinstalling the newly-overhauled injector pump, etc., the problem continued as if I had done nothing.

My friend, a diesel expert, stepped in and helped then and checked the "valve-lash." After he removed the rocker arm cover he inserted the feeler gauge into the space between the #1 cylinder exhaust valve and its rocker arm, and the low RPM problem appeared! He told me that proves it - that valve is the problem! Now - - here's what corrected the problem: He had me spray, with the engine running at about 1/2 speed, about a quart of fresh water into the air intake (remove the filter first) . Then spray about four - to - six - ounces of "Marvel Mystery Oil" into the air intake. Then, slow the engine to about idle and spray more Mystery Oil into the air intake. Let everything sit overnight. The next day, the problem was GONE! Oh, one more thing he did: after removing the rocker arm assembly (2 nuts), he "snapped" the faulty valve several times by using a screwdriver under the injector bracket, forcing the valve down - then quickly sliding the screwdriver sideways so that the valve snapped up. His intent was to help break up the carbon that had built up on it. I believe that is a big part of what helped cure the sticking exhaust valve.

If I had known this, I would have saved about \$1,500 !!! The "fix" actually cost me around \$.30 !, the cost of the Mystery Oil! If anybody has similar problems, send me a note and I'll help however I can.

I Wish You All Fair Winds and Following Seas.....

**Ed Davis.....aka Saylered@aol.com**

## A Southerner goes North

Whilst at home thinking of my next trip on the Solent I had a phone call from Colin Christie (**Stargazer V3378**).

“We’re thinking of holding a Scottish Vega Rally in the Western Isles, can I have the contact addresses for all the Western Scotland Vegas?”

After compiling the list, Colin sent a letter to nearly forty Scottish Vegas! After much chasing, bribing and cajoling five Vegas finally signed up for the inaugural rally. A report has been written by Colin’s wife, Julia. I have added my few words.

I chatted to the Christies and informed them that the VAGB would subsidise the event and help in any way we could. Another bonus, for me, would be that I would join the get-together as my family would be holidaying in Scotland in the caravan. What a chance this would be for me, I had heard of the fabulous scenery and sailing in Western Scotland so I quickly signed up as crew!

I travelled up on the Wednesday, driving from Malvern to Moffat in The Borders where I stayed at Keith Patrick’s (**Rough Diamond V0990**) house for the night. Obviously I was shown around the various pubs of Moffat where I sampled the many beers! The following morning was not good!

I continued my journey the following day and drove up to Oban where my wife and children were camping near Connel Bridge. What scenery, it was fantastic. I always thought the views in Sweden were breath-taking but Western Scotland certainly takes the biscuit! After a night at the campsite in the caravan I and my two boys drove to Balvicar on Seil Island to meet Colin & Julia Christie onboard Stargazer. Well I found the boat but no sign of any humans (or dogs). As Nick Bowles (**Fairwinds V1842**) lives just one mile up the road I decided to impose myself and the boys on his hospitality. Obviously not a morning person, Nick dragged himself out of bed to meet me face to face for the first time (we had spoken many times on the phone and email). Tea, biscuits and loads of chatting about Vegas followed and we then agreed to drive back to the pontoon to see if the Christies had appeared. They were there complete with both dogs (Shep & Tess), essential crew members of Stargazer!

Seeing the inside of Stargazer was an eye-opener, you can certainly see that Colin is a talented cabinet-maker. He has promised to compile an article, complete with photos, on the refurbishment of Stargazer. We drank tea, yarned a little then decided to take both Vegas, Stargazer & Fairwinds, for a short sail down Seil Sound. The tide was right; Wind on the beam F4/5 and cracking sailing ensued. Colin, Julia, Me, Adam, Richard and the two dogs sailed on Stargazer whilst Nick and Kathy sailed on Fairwinds. The wind was just about perfect and both Vegas showed their prowess with a single reef in the main we shot down the sound, around two small islands and back to Balvicar for tea. The sheltered seas certainly make for ideal sailing conditions. Even Adam had a go at helming Stargazer and proved to be very capable (looks as though I will be sharing Southern Comfort soon!). I was given the honour of bringing Stargazer onto the pontoon; Julia took the stern

line whilst Colin was on the bow. The old adage of slowly, slowly was the way when just as we were about to kiss the pontoon, I heard a very, very loud splash and stifled scream. Oops, Julia had misread the height of the dodgers and slid into the clear waters of Seil Sound. Never have I seen a person shot straight back out of the water so fast, I am sure she hardly got wet! Julia was OK which is more than I can say for her camera! (Anyone know how to fix a salt encrusted Pentax?) Once back on the pontoon Adam, Richard and I drove back to Connel Bridge for the night to stay in our land yacht (caravan)!

The following day I drove to Seil Island where the two Vegas had been joined by a third, **UGO IGO (V1280)** skippered by Hugh Semple. Hugh and his father have owned UGO IGO since new (over thirty years). He had managed to find the entrance into Balvicar at nighttime (not an easy entrance by any stretch of the imagination). Colin, Julia and I drove to Ardfern to help David Beveridge, **Lyra (V0881)**, sail her back to Seil Sound. Perfect weather but no wind. The tidal gate of Doris Mor was benign and the weather was perfect for a touch of sunbathing. We motored to a small bay on Luing Island called Toberonochy where we were to meet the other Vegas. It was a perfect place for lunch. The anchor held first time and a bottle of wine was opened in celebration of our trip from Ardfern to Toberonochy Bay. We were finally joined by the rest of the Vegas when Fairwinds, Ugo Igo, Stargazer and Rough Diamond dropped anchor. When the mackerel started to feed on the small fry we decided to try our luck and three were caught. The old parable of feeding the five thousand came to mind. David helmed all the way to Balvicar where we tied up at the pontoon to make the total of Vegas to four. Rough Diamond was to join us much later, in the dark, luckily Keith is an able sailor and managed to moor up with little problem. He then sailed up the rest of the sound in the Tinker Tramp to join us all at the pub for our evening meal. A lovely pub at the top of Seil Sound but very touristy. We had to leave early to get the boys back in bed at the caravan whilst I dreamt of the following days' voyage.

The following day I drove to Balvicar to join all the Vegas on the pontoon. The night had obviously lasted well into the wee hours as not much movement could be seen on the pontoon. I made a point of being as loud as I could and finally there were stirrings among the Vegas. The trip was to be a short voyage through Cuan Sound, Eisdale Island Passage and then to Insh Island for lunch. The weather was again wonderful but with very little wind. It seemed as though we were in the Greek Islands. I had heard about Cuan Sound all the previous evening and so was a wee bit apprehensive. David helmed through the fast ebbing tide of Cuan Sound. It was lucky that it was neap tides and hardly any wind, I could see how this could be a very nasty place indeed in the wrong conditions. We shot through Cuan Sound and headed to Eisdale Passage where there are still the remnants of the old Slate Quarries. Once through this very narrow passage we sailed over to Insh Island where we all anchored in a lovely, peaceful bay. Shared sandwiches, beers and wines followed with much talking about our beloved Vegas. A truly memorable trip. I can't wait until next year – so long as I get an invite to crew in someone's' Vega as it would take me about four weeks to get Southern Comfort (V1703) up to the Western Isles. Many thanks, yet again, to Julia and Colin for arranging this wonderful regatta. Next year I expect a much larger turnout of the bonnie Vegas of Western Scotland.....

**Steve Birch Vega "Southern Comfort" V1703**

## **The Saving of 'Vega' 1210 - Full account**

### **Formerly named 'AGEV'**

Before beginning any story it is sometimes a little more interesting if something is known of the background of the people involved.

My brother Ted and I began our sailing careers in an old "Enterprise" in the late 60's. We sailed and raced from Southampton Sailing Club in the shadow of the old Eastern docks. Before long the lure of deeper waters lead me to study coastal navigation at night school and then to enroll at Warsash School of Navigation on what was then the Board of Trade Coastal and Ocean Yachtmaster's course. Suitably qualified our summer holidays from that time on was spent on charter yachts with land lubber workmates and friends making up the crew. Regardless of weather we would charge forth across the channel to cruise the French coast and more interestingly the many and varied Channel Islands.

In the early 70's brother Ted got himself hitched with a wife and a baby on the way sailing for him had to take a back seat. Having lost my crew I sold the old 'Enterprise' and moved to a small single-hander. While Ted laboured with married life, I for a time followed a career in sailing, I became a yacht delivery skipper and eventually realised a life long ambition by taking a yacht across the Atlantic from Spain to Nassau. That was 30 years ago in 1973. Five years later I also married. We bought a place in Hythe to the west of Southampton Water and promptly joined the local sailing club. The club class boat at that time was the 'Hornet'. I tracked down a proven race winner in Norfolk and trailed her home. Before indoctrinating my wife, Sally, to the foibles of the 'Hornet' she watch while I sailed the dingy with an experienced crew on the trapeze. We capsized four times and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Upon returning to the shore we were met by Sally and her first comment was "you will never get me out in that thing". The 'Hornet' mouldered on our front lawn for a year and then I gave it away. I then bought a little 20' wooden sloop which Sally very gamely helped to restore to pristine condition. Unfortunately Sally and water never really got on but we did manage to sell the yacht for a handsome profit. My sailing disappeared and I took up gardening as a hobby, that was over 20 years ago, and this is now.

I should also add that 20 years ago Ted remarried to a lov'ly cornish lass, Jacqie. They had two children, one of each. The son, Andrew, has inherited the family love of sailing. His grounding was in a little Mirror dingy but since then he has done a work experience course at Hythe marina and had the opportunity to sail on a variety of yachts including the famous 'Maiden'. Andrew is now set on a career as a shipwright, having recently secured an apprenticeship with Berthon Boats in Lymington.

For the past couple of years Ted has been working to rekindle my interest in sailing. This in part is due to his son Andrew who is now keen to follow in our footsteps and do some offshore sailing and racing. In the winter of 2002 I gave in and agreed to go half shares in a yacht. Our first step was to rejoin the local sailing club and suss out the position with regard to moorings. It soon transpired that a fin keeled yacht was out of the question, 'deep moorings were few and the waiting list very long'. It would have to be a twin keeler.

During the winter months we scoured the yachting magazines and the local clubs to see what was on offer. Westerlies abound but even though they offered very good accommodation their sailing qualities left something to be desired. Gloomy, dark evenings we would often be found clambouring over a succession of craft in search of the one to fit the bill. The winter of 2002 gave way to a new year and the discovery of our 'Vega'.

It is early February 2003, club night at Hythe Sailing club. With pint in hand the evening is mild, Ted and I wander down the rows of boats huddled ashore. We admire deep keeled 'Twisters' and 'Contessa 26'. 'Look at the lov'ly lines of this one' Ted remarked. My gaze settles on a wreck of a yacht. She reeks of neglect. Dried barnacles festoon the hull, the guardrail lines hang over the side and the halyards are green and hard with missuse. Ted hauls himself aboard and peers through broken and rotten washboards to the sodden mess below. I follow him up and foot promptly disappears through a hatch cover. She is half full of water and what once passed for an engine is now a rusting lump of cast iron. Out of sympathy for the yacht we locate the bilge pump and pump her dry. Sliding cupboard doors are swollen and refuse to budge. The upholstery is fetid and beyond saving. The electrics hang in a tangled bunch of wires. 'Probably a pretty good yacht in her day,I'd say'. Now she lies forlorn and borderline for the scrapheap. We gathered up our now empty glasses and make our way back to the clubhouse for a refill and a chat.

Ensnconced in comfortable chairs we get into conversation with established members. From them we learn that the yacht we have been on is a 'Vega'. Apparently the owner had health problems and virtually abandoned her on the mooring. For three years she swung to the chain, summer and winter. Then the club brought her ashore where she has now lain for a further three years. It seemed that the club committee were now on the verge of asking the owner to remove the yacht. Brian Boniface, 'club mooring secretary', now entered the conversation, 'If you are interested in taking her on we would lay you a mooring'. Ted's eyes light up, 'no chance' I say, I want to sail this year, not rebuild a wreck

A week later Ted gave me a ring. I could tell he had been thinking about the 'Vega'. He went through all the pro's and con's and at the end of our conversation there were about twenty con's and two pro's. Number one; apparently she is a very good sea boat, fast and safe. Also she would be very cheap.'So it sounds a definite no go', says I. Ted thought for a moment, How about making an offer

The following evening I phoned the owner and made what I hoped was a derisory offer of £2.000 pounds. He encouraged me by saying that he was looking at a figure around £4.000. I apologised for my low offer but went on to point out that she would need a considerable amount of work and money to bring her back to something like her old self. I also added that this was just a tentative offer on the off-chance that he might be interested. We left it that he would discuss the matter with his wife and I expected to hear no more.

One week later to my chagrin and Ted's delight the owner phoned me and accepted our offer. On the 17th February 2003 we became joint owners of Vega no 1210 and a hectic four months of work began.

Amongst the load of paraphernalia passed onto us by the former owner were several back copies of the 'Vega society Magazine'. This was a most useful find and we were soon in touch with Vega gurus 'Steve Birch' and 'Di Webb'.

First on my list of jobs was to make the outside of the hull presentable. Two weeks of scraping off old anti-fouling, cutting back the gel coat with every preparation on the market and several long hours of polishing by hand and machine saw 'Blue Bar', as she was now called, looking like a new yacht. A first coat of Trilux International antifouling was applied and the gold line on the top sides was brought back to life with self adhesive gold tape. A tip here, make sure the area below the tape is thoroughly cleaned with a solvent to remove any trace of polish, or the tape will not stick.

Next most pressing job was the removal of the old Albin petrol engine and the installation of a 13.5hp Beta Marine diesel, ordered of course from Steve. Whilst we awaited delivery I began on the woodwork of the yacht, as this was my particular forte. Brother Ted was responsible for the fitting of the engine and the electrics as he is an ex-marine engineer.

Within a week I had made new washboards from 10mm marine ply. A new engine cover quickly followed and both of these were given seven coats of polyurethane varnish by my wife Sally. She of course had seen the yacht and given it her blessing, deeming it large enough not to heel too alarmingly on a sunny day when the wind blew at zephyr strength, which is the only conditions in which she will come sailing. Sally also took on the job of upholstering the new bunks. Ted and I did not skimp in this area, we bought ultra comfortable marine latex foam, to complete the whole cushioned area in the yacht this cost £500.00 pounds. On top of this was the rather attractive rot proof material, another £200.00 pounds.

Meanwhile the Beta engine had arrived and Steve cooed appreciatively at our efforts to date. Ted began work on the engine plates whilst we waited for several other parts to arrive to complete the installation. This was a frustrating period. You have to bear in mind that when you order an engine it is not a complete set of bits. You will still need a new exhaust, various lengths of hose, new circlips, probably an engine fuel filter and a plastic box from Vetus that fits into the exhaust. Total cost of installation came to £3.900.00 pounds. We did manage to save money on the fuel tank. Ted filled ours with sand and braised over the many pinprick holes that it had acquired. This saved us in the order of £400.00 (£55 from Vetus!) that we had been quoted for a new one in stainless steel.

Meanwhile I had made new teak deck cockpit covers and very smart they looked. Other woodwork jobs involved replacing a bunk cover and making new trim for the cabin sides. Where possible old wood trim was removed taken home for sanding down and polishing before being refitted.

During one of Steves' visits to check on progress he noticed that the cabin roof had been depressed by mast compression. As Ted and I have the necessary expertise I set to and made a copy of the mast reinforcement that you can buy from VAGB. I jacked the cabin up a couple of inches, 'much creaking' and installed the aluminium plate. As a belt and braces job I also used 12mm marine ply on the other side and bolted the whole lot together. The installation was finished off with a marine ply facia to hide the plate.

I now turned my attention to the sails. I was faced with a right old rag-bag selection, seized hanks, stained and with the head pulled out of the best mainsail. I was soon back on the phone to Steve. He put me touch with Paul at Southern Sails. Whilst speaking with Steve I ordered a new Rotostay furling gear for the jib. VAGB price £600.00 pounds. As for the sails I wanted something a little special. Higher spec cloth and fully battened main to race specifications. Total cost for jib and main was a very reasonable £1300 Ted of course was doing his bit of spending, two new batteries and loads of electrical bits to completely rewire the yacht. It took us the best part of a day to let go the pulpit and pushpit so that we could route the wires through the proper holes. With new navigation lights in-situ it was a great moment when Ted fired up the system and we actually had lights.

Another job now reared its ugly head. The rubber seals in the windows leaked. No way would Sally allow her new upholstery into such a damp environment. On to Steve again, considered new rubbers, but in the end settled for the super aluminium ones at £435. The fitting of these involved enlarging the original window opening. We used the back plate supplied with each window as a template. The screws with the kit were of the interference type, which means you have to be pretty accurate when drilling out the holes in the back plates so that the screws are held securely. We considered this type of fitting a design fault, if you happen to drill a hole too large or remove a screw for any reason it is very difficult to tighten it again. Much better idea would be to use small nuts and bolts and then fit a cover on the inside of the cabin side to each bolt like those used on mirror screws. Unfortunately the windows developed a leak which we eventually solved by spraying the glass round the seals with 'Wax Oil'. Wonderful stuff, obtainable from any motor spares shop.

By the end of March the yacht was well under way. Steve arranged for the Rotostay to be sent direct. I found this easy to fit in about an hour. In preparation of launch day Ted and I turned our attention to the yacht cradle. We jacked the wheels up and with much oil, grease and sweat we managed to get the seized wheels moving.

Borrowing an idea from Ken Smith 'Vega owner from Fawley club' I vastly improved the appearance of the cabins by cutting up light carpet and using to line all the cabin walls. This has the effect of reducing noise and cutting out light through the hull sides. and it was cheap to do

By early April we were busy doing the thousand and one jobs that needed our attention. The toilet was stripped, cleaned and rebuilt. New sea cocks fitted throughout the boat. As we did not want to drill out more holes than necessary we used gate valves ' same size as the original ones though we would have preferred the ball type as these are more reliable.

With the sails on the way, I set to work getting the rigging into shape. Fortunately the standing rigging was ok but all the running rigging we replaced. Plus new bottle screws. Also purchased a Ronstan mainsheet traveller which looked very smart.

Of course there were a myriad of other jobs seeking attention. Various cracks and superfluous holes were fibre-glassed over, the toilet compartment shelves were rebuilt, rams-horn fitted to the boom for the slab reefing and a great deal of time and frustration was spent on a sheared heel bolt at the base of the rudder pintle. This eventually was totally glassed in and redrilled. We also had to tap a new thread into the heel as it was impossible to buy a bolt to the original thread pattern.

6th May. It was with some trepidation that we awaited the arrival of the yacht surveyor to give 'Blue Bar' a clean bill of health. At the end of the day we need not have worried. No sign of osmosis, she actually registered between 1- 2 throughout the hull, well below critical level. In fact Ted and I were rather proud when the surveyor complimented us on the professional level of our workmanship. When the report finally arrived we found that he had valued 'Blue Bar' at £14500! We could now get her insured. VAGB referred us to K.C. Powell and partners, we found them to be very competitive. This cost a little over £200 which also gave us racing insurance cover of £5000 to cover loss of rig, plus cover for the dingy and outboard motor.

21st May. Met up with Ken Smith and Steve Birch at Hythe Sailing Club for dinner and drinks. They had a good look over 'Blue Bar'. We had hoped to be in the water by now, as we had anticipated doing the VAGB rally from Haslar to the Isle of Wight.

26th May. Launch day is booked for next week. Ted's son Andrew and I get on the second coat of anti-fouling. All the bits and pieces that we removed for cleaning make their way back on board. New horse-shoe buoy fitted to pushpit. Flares and charts checked. New fire extinguisher 'powder type' fitted on bulkhead over the galley. Handles refitted to the now sliding doors. These were slowly dried out and the runners treated to liberal amounts of candle wax.

2nd June. Ted and I work on the navigation instruments, a hundred wires to sort out, or so it seems. Slowly one by one the instruments cough into life. All down to Ted as electronics to me is a complete mystery.

3rd June. We are on the home run. Fitted clock and barometer to cabin bulkhead. Replaced the guardrails. Fitted anode and blow me if the thread in one of the bolts didn't strip and also parted company with the glass fibre patch on the inside of the hull. Off we go again. Ted cut down a couple of set screws and I glassed them in. Ted ran the engine for a good twenty minutes, not a missed beat. Fuel tank secure and no leaks. Nav gear, all working. In the evening Sally brought down the upholstered bunks and 'Blue Bare' looked a picture. We lay out the warps that we feel may be needed for tomorrow's launch. Hoist the new sails in the calm of the evening. They are a perfect set, Paul of Southern Sails is to be complimented. Sally finished off by putting up the new curtains and that's it, now we await for tomorrow.

4th June, Launch day. Bit of a rush this morning, all those last minute jobs. Lay out and bend on main anchor to the new heavier chain. Lashing in place 'just in case'. Kedge anchor bent on to nylon warp with 3 metres of quarter inch chain, ready in the aft locker. Cleared all the rubbish from under the cradle. Ted tells me he had nightmares dreaming of water gushing in through seacocks. High water is at 14.00 hrs. At mid day the tractor arrives to pull us to the slipway. Slowly Blue Bare is encouraged out from her long stay berth in the yacht pound on her journey back to the sea. Chocks under wheels and we wait bursting with pride as many club members offer their congratulations on a job well done. Digital cameras record the moment and with Ted and I on board 'Blue Bar' trundles down the slope and rises from her cradle to the caress of the sea. Quick check of all the seacocks, she is tight. I loosen the warps as Ted fires up the Beta engine. She burbles into life, squint over the stern, yep water coming out we are ready to go. I give the thumbs up to those on shore and we cast

off. Engine in gear and the new three blade prop bites into the water and we move forward. As I wave shoreward the engine coughs twice and grinds to a halt. Mild panic, shouts of advice carry from the shore. I scamper forward and let go the anchor, the wind is onshore and there is little leeway to play with, I let out as much chain as I dare waiting for that fateful bump, it doesn't happen. While Ted sorts out the fuel blockage I break out the jib, anchor up and we sail her to the safety of the pontoon. Air in the fuel line, first time it has happened, was the problem. Within minutes Ted has it sorted and we motor off to our mooring. Pick it up first go and relax with a beer. Within an hour we are sailing down the Solent under full sail, Blue Bar revelling in the environment to which she has been deprived of for so long.

**Post Script:** At the end of the day we found our Vega to be a pretty decent sailing yacht. Although at the start she carried too much weather helm and we had to adjust the rig a couple of times to get her better balanced. Thanks to Ken Smith for his advice on this matter. In total we spent around £10000 pounds to turn Blue Bar into a serviceable yacht once again. But as many people have pointed out we are now sailing a virtually new yacht and I can categorically state that I know absolutely every inch of our yacht. We still have things and work to do. The ends of our spinnaker pole are seized and no amount of coaxing with various lubricants have persuaded them to operate to my satisfaction. Little bits of woodwork still need finishing but nothing that can't wait for winter, now we intend to do some sailing. When we slip in the Autumn the mast will be stepped and repainted, maybe replaced if we think it necessary. A spinnaker is on the shopping list or maybe a cruising chute. In July we shall be off on our first channel trip with 'Blue Bar'. Next year Ted is keen on a bit of deep sea stuff to the Azores. We had hoped to do the round the island race but just missed the entry date and were not willing to part with £150 late entry fee. We shall content ourselves with club racing for the time being.

November 2003.

At the end of October 'Blue Bar' came ashore. As things turned out we never did get in the channel trip. I just had too much on my agenda for 2003. My other activities kept getting in the way. In the end we contented ourselves with visits to the local yachting fleshspots. One of the things to come home to me is just how busy the Solent and the once fairly quiet backwaters have become in the last 20 years since I have been away. They now charge to anchor in Newtown Creek. 'What Cheek!'. And it is a foolish man who tries to get a berth in Yarmouth on a summer weekend. Also the placid amble back up the Southampton water on a balmy evening is now something like a big dipper ride, due entirely to the rash of grotesque gin palace's careering by.

'Blue Bar' suffered with excessive weather helm for most of the season. This curtailed our racing somewhat, it being embarrassing not being able to outpoint the bilge-keelers when close hauled in a bit of a blow. The cause of this was down to myself and pure lack of experience. It was not till late in the season that I had the rig set up as it should be, 'my thanks to the article by Roger Evill on ELKEDOR' which enabled me to do this. This winter will see new standing rigging for the yacht to give us that extra reassurance when we go a little further afield next year. The spinnaker pole ends we found at Southampton boat show and were obtained from Altantic spars. If yours ever seize up they are Proctor pole ends no 059-002.

Right I am off to the club wet room for morning coffee with the old timers, if you are ever in the Hythe area and would like to look over 'Blue Bar' do give me a ring. If it is engine related I will make sure Ted is on hand. All the best for 2004.

**John Trim Vega "Blue Bar" Hythe, Southampton (Tel 02380 844521)**

## Seagull Repellent

It was one of those beautiful mornings when you get up out of bed, look out the window and say to yourself 'this will be a great day for sailing.' With excitement and anticipation, you pack all the necessities for a long daysail. You worked hard all week and deserve this time of doing nothing but sitting back at the helm, with the wind slightly ahead of the beam going nowhere.

Upon arriving at the harbor the weather is better than thought, a steady breeze is coming from the West, perfect! My boat Neverland is located on a mooring. I quickly loaded my dingy and rowed out to Neverland where the adventure starts just 100 yards away. As I was loading the goods from the dingy onto the boat I noticed bird droppings in the cockpit. Not much to think about, just a few drops. I can clean that up in a couple of secs. As I stepped up onto the boat I could then see that the entire deck was covered with, you guessed it, bird-s\*\*\*, as I shouted with anger and maybe a few other words I would rather not repeat. My dreams of a lazy daysail was shattered, there was nothing to look forward to except, scraping, scrubbing, and cleaning.

While I was cleaning the boat many evil visions entered my mind. Thoughts of electrifying the boat and arriving to see seagulls and cormorants hanging dead from every appendage. Birds floating lifeless in the water encircling the boat. I even thought about hanging one seagull from the spreaders in hopes that it would scare all his buddies away. Then another vision hit me offsetting the other visions, Animal Rights Activist picketing my boat, huge fines, and possibly jail time. All the anger faded away when the mess was cleaned up. My bark is much more than my bite, I really love seabirds and would not harm them.

I decided then, because they made my life miserable, I would think of ways to make their life miserable. For the next few weeks I launched an inspection campaign of the moored boats in my area that attracted birds and a closer inspection of the boats that the birds kept away from. There were boats with owls mounted on the spreaders, plastic trash bags tied everywhere, plastic flags draped in and out of the rigging, paper plates strung like Christmas ornaments, pie tin mobiles placed in strategic locations, plastic snakes, brooms and garden racks decorate the tops of mast... To my dismay all of these boats had bird droppings on them. I also noticed that the birds did not land on all of the boats until early evening when the wind subsided, most of these apparatuses will only work when the wind is blowing. The owls definitely did not do their job, in fact, I saw seagulls and owls perched together like bar buddies. Then I saw what might be the key to what I was searching for. I observed two boats that were separated by approximately 25 feet and moored together. One boat had its boom completely covered with bird droppings and the other boat was clean. The boom that

was free from droppings was supported by a jack line that went from one end of the boom to the other end of the boom. Simply, the jack line prevented the birds from landing. No landing equals no guano, could this really be the answer? Later that same day I tied a line to the end of the boom, around the mast, and back to end of the boom again. The next weekend when I arrived at the boat I was happy to see that there were no droppings on the boom cover. It worked. I then proceeded to add permanent lines to places that would keep the birds from landing like at the spreaders and on top of the mast. To my delight, this also worked. A few other areas needed some attention; namely the foredeck and cockpit areas. Instead of running lines back and forth over them, which would be very time consuming I purchased netting from a marine store and attached lines to the net with plastic hook shackles to the ends. The netting is used for extreme seabird problems. For most boats the temporary and permanent lines will handle the job. With the netting I could simply attach and detach it from or to the lower life lines with ease. Finally my boat is about 95% seagull safe. The only droppings that appear are usually fly-by droppings. I have no more stop, squat, and drops to clean up.....

**Sounds a good idea for the Fareham Creek Vegas?**

## **New Sails for an Old Girl.....**

I'm sure glad the new sail fabrics don't need to be gradually stretched out with a series of gentle day sails. Sunday I came fairly close to getting beaten up by a lousy local frontal passage when I was just trying to admire my new sails. In the harbor it was not really wild, a little gusty, so I just tied in one reef and left the buoy with 3/4 of the jib showing. My blasted Irish hat blew overboard as soon as I passed the ferry moorings and that gust actually put the lee rail to (but not under) water. Good grief. Anyway, by that time I figured it would be easier to go ahead and clear the harbor and get the boat self steering before reefing further.

Not necessarily the correct conclusion, but I've been getting pretty confident in the Vega lately. It was visibly rough outside before I passed the right hand shoal and could come up on the wind (southeasterly) and put the windvane to work. With the main just luffing a bit (one reef) she was plunging quite hard into it and bringing a lot of water on deck so I went downstairs and put on foul weather gear and harness before going forward. . just as well. However, the view out the companion as I climbed back on deck was a bit startling, lee rail and racing foam at face level, and the boat was really bucking quite hard in the short breaking chop. Anyway, I got on deck and got back to work.

The new full length battens in the top third of the main greatly reduced the sound and fury of flogging when I slacked things off to put in the second reef and the new rigging worked quite well. I used the halyard winch to get a little extra on the reef pendant, coiled up and scooted back to the cockpit to sheet in. Dang. We were still overpowered, heeling more than I like and going quite hard through the water, probably over 6 kn but I didn't get out the gps to see (knotmeter isn't working just now). I rolled up about half the jib and admired the effect of the foam filled luff. Still had a small wrinkle in

the bottom half of the sail though. . .I wonder if the forestay is too slack? Hmm. Things to learn. At that point, two reefs and half the jib more or less, we were a bit over powered but making really quick way through the water upwind, being pushed around a good bit by the chop. We don't really get "seas" in Puget Sound, but the chop was pretty big. . .I'd guess perhaps 4' or a bit more on average. . .with all the tops breaking at least a little and some pretty vigorously.

And now the point of the story. I ordered 3 reefs and the new sail came with them but they were positioned a little differently from my old sail and I had to replace the longest reefing pendant and move the other two each one step outboard. . .ergo, had to discard the first pendant, put the second one in that hole, and the third pendant into the second hole and I HADN'T YET ROVE OFF THE NEW 3RD. Hadn't actually bought it in fact. Dang.

I learned several things for the next hour more or less. . .brought way more water aboard than I ever had before, undoubtedly went a good deal faster in the boat than ever before, decided I did NOT like beam reaching when that badly over canvassed, so sailed about 70 degrees off the wind on the outbound leg going really fast and slopping occasional wave tops clear over onto the cabin top, though nothing real came in the cockpit (you people who have filled the cockpit and just enjoyed the day amaze me. . .I'd have been terrified I don't doubt). Within about 40 minutes of reefing I concluded there was too good a chance of bending, breaking or ripping something expensive or ruining my own self image, so I tacked her around ALL THE WAY THROUGH 140 DEGREES. . .we had enough way on she never hesitated though we hit a couple of waves pretty hard as we swung through the wind. I kept the jib aback and let her jog along hove to for a minute and it was delightful as usual. . .though we were still making a lot of headway. After that short break I let the jib draw and set the wind vane for home. . .about 110 degrees off the wind, waves on the quarter. Hmm

Going more or less upwind I hadn't noticed the windvane having any trouble handling the boat or complaining about being heavy on the helm. It became immediately obvious that with the main so large relative to the jib the boat was badly out of balance when reaching and the windvane could not hold her at all in the gusts. Given that, she would then over correct after the gust and looked fair to jibe over at one point. I decided that hand steering might be a good idea at that point and let the vane go off watch. That was a workout! The tiller was very heavy and the boat REALLY wanted to round up in the gusts. The third reef would have made the day just a rough but pleasant sail. With only the second reef available I was in the unenviable position of steering the car while a homicidal (suicidal?) maniac who didn't like me had charge of the throttle.

Well, I guess it was glorious sailing, just a bit over my normal standard. We weren't surfing continuously, probably only 5 or ten seconds out of the minute, but it was enormously impressive when she'd suddenly squirt ahead and everything would turn to foam all around us. . .I was about to decide I liked the whole program when a noticeably larger wave came into view astern. I hesitated then decided to luff up into it a bit and ended up, too late, broadside to as the wave passed perfectly gently. I was just congratulating myself and starting to bear off when the REALLY large wave behind the first one decided to break aboard full length of the port side. That was the first solid water I've ever seen in the cockpit. . .might have been a pan full. . .more than a cup anyway. I let go

of the tiller, grabbed the coaming and held on. The boat rounded up sharply and rolled down heavily to starboard. As she started to recover I grabbed for the tiller and yarded her head back off the wind and she took off roaring. Gracious sakes.

Well, at that rate of speed it wasn't very long and we were back at the harbor mouth, standing a bit more upright as we got in behind the land, but still going like a horse over fences. The ferry was still in her slip so we continued on across the fairway, cheated inside the shoal marker 30 feet and scooted along the edge of the shoal, surfing one last time well inside the harbor mouth as a wave broke in the skinny water.

Sometime during the fun I'd knocked the skin off one knuckle on my left hand and it was dripping watery blood all over the cockpit. And me with a shockingly white new main to furl. I determined to pick up my buoy under sail and get a bandage on the leak before even touching the lovely new canvas. So where did the wind go? I had to roll out a bit more of the jib to keep way on her until we reached the gap in the hills and a gust knocked us half over again and we reached in grand style up into the moorage and stopped. . .or drifted lazily around. For the next bit I'd drift a while, trimming sails on both sides of the boat, beating and reaching, getting to within a few yards of the buoy and then losing way in a lull or involuntarily tacking when the breeze changed. It wasn't prettily done, but finally she was moored up chattering away at the dinghy about the great things she'd done and then came the breeze back through the anchorage and wanted to take her back to sea. I bandaged the knuckle (a tiny little leak to have made so much blood), put the coat on the sails and coiled down, put the cabin back together and went for a walk in the park.

The breeze was only just over 30 knots reported ashore, and I suppose the gusts might have been another 5 or so above that. I'll reeve off the 3rd reef pendant Saturday morning if not before.

**Ken Preston, Katia Sofia, Seattle area**

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