



Mar 2007

Webpage - www.albinvega.co.uk

Letter from The Secretary Bird.....

Hello Fellow Vega sailors and friends,

Greetings to you all and I wish you a Happy New Year, although this is somewhat in the past.

I would like too thank all those members who wrote to me, phoned and sent me cards for my recent bereavement - it was much appreciated. Those who tried to contact me via email: DONT. I have been off the email system for the several months so if you need to contact me about canvas-work or any other matter then please phone (0208 642 9521), write (76 Burdon Lane, Cheam, Surry, SM2 7BZ) or contact Steve (steve@albinvega.com) and he will pass any queries on to me.

The Laying-Up Dinner at Banstead Downs Golf Club was well attended with 25 members and guests. This has been our main venue for the last nine years, and we have virtually colonised it and made it our "HQ". They have always treated us like royalty and their chef has spoilt us totally. Unfortunately, due to the fact that my late husband, John, is no longer the contact, we can no longer use these facilities. This is a tremendous blow as it is not easy to find a place that is so comfortable and tailor-made to our needs, as well as having a first class Chef and Sommelier. This year the AGM and Fitting-Out Lunch will be held at my home instead, 76 Burdon Lane, Cheam, Surrey, SM2 7BZ on Saturday March 10th at 11:30. A Cold Buffet will be served after the AGM. If you intend to come to the AGM/Buffer then please complete the attached flyer so I know how many to cater for. The cost will be £12 which includes all refreshments, any funds left over will be donated to Club Funds (VAGB).

The Happy Hour at the Boat Show took place as usual at 4pm in the RYA Lounge on the second Thursday of the show. I had to leave early but at that point there were about ten members and friends and the full committee, it was also very nice to see some of our long distance members. I dont know what the others thought but I found the show disappointing with a huge emphasis on plastic, the usual electronics and large and very expensive boats in both the sailing and powered sections.

There seemed to be a certain sameness and every Chandlery seemed to sell exactly the same thing. I would love to see the wooden boats again, if there are any left around, and skills as well like rope splicing, block making, wooden boat building, skinning a canoe..... Or dont youngsters build canoes? (That's how I started!) I bought the plans of a Percy Blandford kayak at one of the early Earls Court shows for £2 10s 0d - I was 16 and over the moon with excitement with my latest acquisition. I built the canoe in my Aunt's garage during the school holidays and named it PBK after it's designer as I couldnt think of a name for a long thin boat!! The rest is history but all you need is a small boat.

Eons ago I can remember watching a team of people from Tristan da Cunha showing how they could build one of their boats from rough timber which was then skinned in canvas, this was all completed in the 10 days the show lasted! I was very impressed with the stalwartness of the finished boat considering it was wood and painted canvas. These boats had to be dragged through the pounding surf onto the volcanic beach every time it was beached. Now it's just huge, expensive plastic where everything looks the same - No wonder the Vega has so many fans.

Well enough reminiscing. For those of you that haven't heard, VAGB have been given the honour of hosting the next IFR (International Friendship Regatta) in the summer of 2008. This will be the third time the VAGB has been the host nation. The first time it was held at Cowes in 1984, the second was on the Medway in 1998. This time plans are underway for it to be held on the East Coast (near Ipswich on the River Orwell. Tides dictate the first week in July so please pencil this into your diary. The Organising Committee is working tirelessly under the direction of Mike Freeman to put on a great event. Our last event is still being talked about.....

I wish you well in your fitting-out and when you finally launch, I hope you have a fine sailing season.

Cheers Diana Webb V 1698 " Bugle "

Roger & Jasmeet Fairest
V "Ocean Sunrise"
Ryde, IOW
Hampshire

David Hart
V1041 Georgia
St. Just, Mylor
Cornwall

Andy Scott
V1364 Lyra
Fairlie
Scotland

Gary Winks
V821 Vegality
Whitby
Yorkshire

Graham Culverhouse
V1717 Moombatoo
Poole
Dorset

Mike Morcher
V2822 Buffa
Pinmill
East Coast

Clive Cottrell
V2661 Arlan
Chichester

New Members since Sept 2006

Trans-Atlantic in an Albin Vega

It didn't sink in until the dark hump of Bermuda disappeared behind us: we were about to cross the Atlantic. It should have been a daunting prospect, but instead it was a relief to leave the bustle of St Georges, plagued as it is by a constant crowd of gaudy, sunburned cruisers. We had spent our last day in Bermuda frantically completing the final preparations; re-fuelling, checking food and water supplies, phoning home and clearing customs. I was impatient to get going; finally casting off would mean an end to the interminable list of improvements and instalments that had hounded us ever since we bought the boat seven months ago. So, as the wind dropped and the sun sank, I simply felt drowsy; content to point Beowulf eastwards and let her settle into her own rhythm. I would leave the excitement and trepidation until the morning.

Finding Beowulf

Earlier that year, and to my surprise, I had managed to persuade my boyfriend, Paul, to buy into my dream of buying and fitting out a small sailing boat. Having done some research we knew what we wanted; a small, sturdy boat that could take us anywhere, but which we could afford on our very limited budget. That boat turned out to be Beowulf, a 1976 Albin Vega, which we found in Florida in November 2004. Her previous owners had done a fantastic restoration job inside, but she needed some work if we wanted to fulfil our ambitious plans for offshore sailing. We spent the next few months in a ramshackle dockyard (more floating trailer park than modern marina) working on the boat. We fitted new standing and running rigging, substituting Sta-Loks for the old swage terminals; we checked and replaced the chainplates; made lazyjacks; constructed storm windows; purchased an EPIRB and liferaft. We found a second hand mainsail, made lee-cloths and built new, watertight hatch covers. We made Beowulf ready for anything we could think of. However, it was the engine that proved to be the most difficult and most frustrating job. During our forays up and down Florida's Intra-coastal waterway looking for cheap parts and gear, our engine had started leaking oil. Although we managed to diagnose the problem with the help of our much-thumbed Nigel Calder book, we could not fix it ourselves, nor could we afford to pay anyone else to do the job. We were stuck. But Jonny, a friendly mechanic at the yard, had other plans. He offered to do the work in his home workshop for the price of parts and the promise that we would send him postcards regularly once we got going. The catch was that the work had to be done in secret, away from the yard and his employers, and so we had to take the engine out of the boat. Two days of blood and sweat (mostly Paul's, I admit) and the engine was forlornly perched in the back of Jonny's truck, stripped of all the unnecessary, bulky parts. A week later it was being bullied and goaded back onto its mounts and we were ready to go.

Florida to the Bahamas

After a brief stop in Miami to pick up the liferaft, we headed across the Gulf Stream to the Bahamas. Although the passage was only 50 miles, this was our first taste of offshore sailing and our first trip beyond the sight of land. Over optimistic when calculating our speed during our passage plan, we didn't reach the Bahama Bank until after dark and were forced to hove-to until daylight could reliably guide us onto the shallow bank. We anchored in the lee of a small, unpopulated island and caught up on some sleep before heading on towards our destination; a small port of entry where we

could clear customs without paying berthing or marina fees. The following day we were becalmed and could go nowhere, while the two subsequent days saw a nice, stiff breeze, but from the very direction we wanted to go. By the time we reached the Berry Islands it had been five days since we left Florida. We soon found out that Paul's Mum, understandably worried by our late arrival, had phoned the US Coastguard, who blithely informed her that there had been bad weather in the Gulf Stream (there hadn't) and that she should contact the Bahaman authorities. This information came through the island grapevine and Paul was soon on the phone to placate his anxious mum. We had learnt our first lesson; give ourselves a generous amount of time to complete a passage. We stayed on the Berry Islands for two weeks, exploring the quiet anchorages around the mostly deserted islands. Compared to the rest of the Bahamas, the Berrys are relatively untouched by the heavy tourist trade and commercial influence of the US. Although the northernmost island is periodically invaded by the raucous antics of cruise ship passengers on jet skis, the rest of the chain is free from boat and human traffic and is a tranquil haven of tiny islands and clear water. After two weeks of rest and idleness, it was time to get back to work and finish the jobs that still needed to be done and we headed north towards the more populous and popular Abacos. In Marsh Harbour we struggled to shrug off the midday heat and get on with our work; topping up food supplies, checking and recaulking the stanchions, and repairing our tired and ripped dinghy. Although some looked at our modest 27 foot boat and kindly (but annoyingly) suggested that our plans to reach Europe, let alone Bermuda, were overambitious, we were determined to give it a go. Our planned route would take us north from the Bahamas to Bermuda, and we reasoned that at any time we could abort and head west to the US. This passage would be our test; to see if we were able, or even wanted, to continue to the Azores. If not we would stay in Bermuda or head north to Canada.

Bahamas to Bermuda

Without fanfare, we slipped out of Man-o-War Cay in the Abacos and headed north, leaving the Bahamas behind us. I had imagined the open ocean to be a heaving mass of spume-flecked waves, but in reality a large, gentle swell rolled us slowly northwards and we spent more time reading our books than reefing sails. The most difficult part of the journey turned out to be the sun, which, without a bimini, was hard to avoid. In fact throughout the twelve-day passage we were plagued more by calms than by bad weather. On the evening of the eleventh day we were surprised to see the lights of Bermuda and by lunchtime the next day we had skirted the island's southern coast and were clearing customs in St Georges. Friendly, lively and beautiful, Bermuda welcomed us as soon as we set foot on the sunny streets of St Georges. Desperate for fresh, cold food, our first stop had been the ice cream shop before we made our calls home saying we'd arrived safely, then a much-needed shower. After a few days in St Georges we sailed to the capital, Hamilton, on the other side of the island. We wanted to make a bimini and needed to find a replacement canister for one of our lifejackets, which had inflated itself in the locker. Hamilton is busy with cruise ships and pleasure craft and we struggled to find an anchorage, twice swinging into the channels used by the inter island ferries. We had just started a third attempt when a small speedboat came alongside us. Thinking this was some busybody come to either offer us "advice" or tell us off, I was expecting the worse when the driver announced that he'd been watching us struggle from his house across the bay and was offering us the use of his mooring buoy for free. We quickly agreed and were soon securely moored. For the next week Mr Butterfield, the driver of the speed boat, let us use his shower, lent us bikes, took us to the chandlery and finally treated us to dinner, simply in an effort to welcome us

to the island. With all this generosity we were reluctant to leave, but with tropical storms threatening in the Eastern Caribbean it was time to go. But, with low-pressure systems racing up the US coast, there was only one way to head; east. We headed back to St Georges to top up our diesel and water tanks and wait for a weather window and in a couple of days we were heading out of the harbour and into the Atlantic proper.

The Atlantic

Our first night at sea saw us hurriedly motoring away from a waterspout, and prompted what became an obsessive monitoring of with the weather. Every six hours we collected weather fax from the SSB and carefully plotted the path of low-pressure systems and their accompanying fronts. Opting to avoid the depressions and keep south in the fickle winds in the northern tip of the doldrums, we slowly drifted towards the Azores. Caught by only a couple of mild cold fronts, the rest of the trip was interrupted by days of glassy calms when all we could do was watch dolphin and pilot fish play around the bow of the boat. With only two of us, our watch system consisted of a continual rota of three hours on, three hours off, and in bad weather we were often both in the cockpit. But in calmer weather, with the monitor windvane steering the boat and with little traffic and no land to watch for, we often ended up napping on watch. One night I woke from just such a nap to find Beowulf starkly illuminated by the floodlight of a tanker sitting off our starboard side. With images of imminent collision and splintering fibreglass playing out in my mind, I snatched the radio mic and turned the volume up, catching the end of a transmission. Trying to regain some poise I returned the call. Rather than running us over, the massive tanker had seen our lights and come over to check if we were alright and asked if we needed anything. This kind of curious camaraderie was typical of a lot of the commercial traffic that spotted us, but was our first such encounter. After such a brutal introduction to the well-meaning interest of large ships, we soon became used to seeing tankers cross the horizon, slow and then head towards us. Sometimes they would linger eerily before moving on, while others would check in to have a chat on the radio and find out what we were up to. We saw a ship every couple of days, and such attention meant that we were not as lonely or isolated as I had first imagined.

Arriving in the Azores

Despite the excitement of the journey itself, it was a relief to arrive in the Azores. After twenty-six days at sea we were tired, salty and desperate for a cold drink. The day before we landed we managed to catch two skipjack tuna (the only fish we managed to catch in the whole Atlantic) and I took this as a good omen. Pulling into Horta, we were greeted by other sailors who had made the crossing themselves or arrived from Europe and were welcomed into an international community of sailors. Some we already recognised from Bermuda and the Bahamas and it was a chance to catch up with old friends. We discovered that a boat of four Frenchmen we had first met in Bermuda had been hit by a whale five days out from the Azores. Their rudder had been damaged and a hole smashed in the cockpit floor. Having made hasty repairs they spotted a helicopter and, calling them on the radio, found that they belonged to a nearby US Naval ship. After searching the French yacht for bombs, the Americans made a replacement rudder and gave the sailors a welcome supply of water and champagne. The Frenchmen wisely declined an offer of a tow and made their own way towards the Azores. Thankful that our own adventure had been a little more sedate, we started to settle back into life onshore and began to explore our new surroundings. Each island in the Azores

has its own individual character and identity, with distinct traditions and atmosphere. After a month at sea we were happy to wander around small towns and villages, eating ice cream and drinking beer, joining in festivals and fiestas as and when we stumbled across them. But before long our thoughts turned to the next leg to Vigo, Spain. Happy in the Azores, we were reluctant to leave and neither I, nor Paul, relished the idea of another long stint at sea. We knew that we would be fighting both the prevailing current and wind and that this leg would take us across a busy shipping lane. But it was late August and we needed to be in Spain by the end of September and before the autumn gales started pounding the Atlantic coast of Galicia. Begrudgingly we cast off from the dock in Ponta Delgada and headed back out to sea.

Azores to Spain

Although we were by now familiar with the routine of ocean sailing and settled quickly into our watch pattern, this was to be the hardest leg. Unlike our previous trips when we were blessed with sunshine and gentle breezes, this journey saw choppy seas and a constant drizzle; I swear I was wet for most of the two weeks. One advantage of the inclement weather was that we perfected hoisting-to. Exhausted after the passage of a particularly vicious cold front, we took the jib down and turned into the wind. With the rudder tied off to leeward, the mainsail held us into the waves and Beowulf settled into a surprisingly comfortable motion. It was the best sleep I had during the whole leg. Two days from the western coast of Spain we were enveloped in low cloud and visibility was reduced to a couple of miles. We thought nothing of it until a tanker emerged from the gloom barely a mile away, then a few hours later a second, and a third. Without radar onboard Beowulf, we had to rely on other faster, bigger traffic having a radar, switching it on, and looking at us. This was not a comforting thought and we regularly broadcast our position, heading and speed on channel 16. Yet just as the traffic seemed to be getting heavier, the cloud lifted and we had clear visibility for the following twenty-four hours. It was still unnerving to thread our way through the now continuous flow of ships, especially after the miles of open ocean we had become accustomed to. We both stayed on watch for most of the time, catching only short naps and so were exhausted, damp, but elated when we finally entered the Ria and headed up the river to Vigo. By the next day the cloud had descended again and we counted ourselves incredibly lucky to have had clear weather to cross the busy shipping lanes. Vigo, a bustling commercial and tourist port was a shock after the relative isolation of our two weeks at sea and the quiet of the Azores before that. Too tired to really think, we stumbled onto the dock in search of a shower, telephone and something to eat. Even once these needs had been addressed it was a few days before the enormity of what we had done sank in; we'd crossed the Atlantic. Looking back now, what I am amazed by is not the journey itself, but the amount of support and help we had from people who had no reason to help us. Without Jonny we would never have left Florida, and without Mr. Butterfield's generosity we would probably have been trapped in Bermuda by the hurricane season. So many others helped us along the way too that there are too many to mention. All the days at sea are starting to merge into a hazy memory of sunny days and rolling water, but my impression of each person we met along the way remains crisp and clear; etched in my memory by their gestures of kindness and welcome.

Isla Reynolds Vega "Beowulf"

Letter from Spring Fever

We're back in Preveza; which is where we were when I sent the last e-mail at the beginning of July and at no time in between have we been further than 100 miles (about 24 hours sail) from here.

Lots of sunshine, in fact July and August were seriously hot. I like it that way, but at times it was even getting a bit much for me – in the afternoon's we tried to either be underway to get the sea breeze, or hidden under the sun awning with a cold drink and a good book! Its eased off a lot now, in part because its getting dark by 8:00 pm, so has longer to cool-off overnight and we've even had some rain (we'd begun to forget what that was) though usually its fallen as part of some spectacular thunderstorms, for all of which we've fortunately been tucked-up somewhere sheltered and secure; so no dramas to report.

The boat numbers have dropped over the last three weeks too; July and August the popular anchorages and harbours were chock-a-block with Charter yachts and Flotilla Holiday fleets (which were always good for a laugh when they tried mooring up/anchoring in the generally brisk afternoon breezes) and Italian yachts who were invariably manic, but at least predictable! We've decided that its difficult to work out what any yacht will do in any given situation; a lot depends on where and when they learnt to sail; however, if its Italian flagged you just work out what would be the most ludicrous thing you could do in that situation and be fairly confident that they'll do it! And at high speed too.

During the bulk of August we took ourselves south down to Zakynthos to see the turtles, across to the Peleponese to visit Ancient Olympia and on into the Gulf of Patras, to do very little, other than find somewhere that the Italians weren't. Otherwise we've been sailing in circles around Levkas, Ithaca and Cephalonia Islands, getting good sun tans, drinking lots of beer and generally avoiding anything that might be considered hard work!

We've not had anymore hospital visits, though my gammy ankle has been pretty crap all summer, which has curtailed our walking/exploring to a large extent (Les reckoned it was too bloody hot to walk far anyway!).

Spring Fever has performed well, other than on the evening of the World Cup Final – at least it gives us something to remember the day by; the football was pretty forgettable. She sprung a leak on the toilet tank's evacuation pump. Lesley did a deal whereby she cooked and washed up for a week in exchange for me repairing the pump/cleaning up the mess on my own; it proved to be one of the worst bargains I've ever struck, if it happens again I think I'll just scuttle the boat and buy a new one!

We also twice suffered with a 'stowaways' when a mouse got aboard; I suppose they're preferable to rats which a couple of friends suffered, but they were a bugger to try and catch – if you set a trap sensitive enough for a mouse to trip it, then it snapped every time the wash from a passing boat rocked us. The second one we never did catch; I was chasing it around the deck with a big stick and it jumped over the side, from which I learned two amazing things about mice: - they can jump a long

way – it was 3-4 feet to the quay and it only just missed making it by a few inches and they're fantastic swimmers – having landed in the water it swam away and ten seconds later climbed the four foot vertical harbour wall a good 15 feet further down the quay and escaped, presumably to invade someone else's yacht.

We'll be here for a couple of days then we're off up to Corfu to visit friends and collect my nephew and his girlfriend, who're going to join us on board for a week and 'learn to sail' – I hope they're successful as they'll then be able to explain it to me! After that it'll be back down here to Preveza to lay-up Spring Fever for the winter and then we'll be flying back to the 'real world' about mid-October.

Bob 'n Lesley Vega "Spring Fever"

A trip to the Archives.....

Sounds like a lost archipelago doesn't it. Actually it's a pile of ten logbooks covering my journeys in 'Jenavive' over the last 24 years. They are nothing fancy and the handwriting is bloody awful but they brought back so many happy memories of the many journeys made and the people I've shared my boat with over the years.

I turned up the logbooks when doing our annual Xmas upheaval and in the New Year and having a few spare moments started to read. I don't go in for narrative just the bare facts who is on board, when and where along with wind speed, direction course, barometer etc.

Needless to say the wind is normally abaft the beam at least it seems that way to me.

One day I'll sort out all my various crews and what ports we have visited but on this occasion it was just after the London Boat Show and I was thinking of the good friends that I have made through the Vega Association (VAGB) in rallies at home and overseas.

The first reference I could find was to a rally on the Medina at the Folly Inn in July 1986 when I met up with Vela Vega, Tortuga and Flicka. I recorded that we had partied on Vela Vega although I have no clear memory of the occasion.

My appetite whetted in September 1987 I sailed from Poole to Cowes single-handed in a force 6 to 7 with never more than half a genny up, in order to meet up with the Solent Vegas. On arriving at the designated marina I could see no sign of the assembled fleet. Eventually I was hailed by Mike Edmonds, the then Secretary, who informed me that the rally was off as the local boats considered the wind too strong. I made my way back to Poole cursing them all.

Strangely enough this didn't put me off, for in July 1989 I was part of an Anglo Dutch fleet (22 boats) assembled at Camper Nicholson's in Gosport, after dining in splendour in the CPO's mess at HMS Victory we raced the next day between Langstone and Bembridge and the day after from

there to Beaulieu River for the prize giving and final dinner.

After this I really got the taste for this international junketing. In July 1990 I set off for Enkhuisen in the Netherlands for the International Friendship Rally (IFR). I recorded four British boats, 'Bugle', 'Alouette', 'In Parenthesis' and of course 'Jenavive'.

Nothing could hold me back now, in July 1992 I set off for the IFR in Fredricksund in Denmark. I can't remember the other British boats on this occasion but Di Webb and Eric Shaw were there in 'Susannah' and I believe 'Alouette'.

For some long forgotten reason I didn't make the 1994 IFR in Sweden or the 1996 IFR in Germany, but in 1998 the IFR was back in the UK. The weather gods were not kind to us and prevented most of our overseas guests crossing the North Sea in their Vegas but a number came over on the ferry and we enjoyed an excellent rally based initially at Hoo Ness SC on the Medway and finishing at St Katharine's Dock in the heart of London under the shadow of the Tower. It was an outstanding IFR and my overseas Vega friends think it was one of the most enjoyable.

In July 2000 it was the turn of the Dutch Vega club to host us in the historic city of Hoorn. There were 57 Vegas present and at least 5 from the UK, 'Bugle', 'Scandi', 'Southern Comfort', 'Toria 11' and 'Jenavive' and in addition a non-standard vega 'Rozanna'. Another great occasion much enjoyed by all and a good cruise home in company.

I missed the IFR in Denmark 2002 due to family commitments but July 2004 saw my most ambitious trip yet when we sailed to Marstrand in Southern Sweden. This time my crew included not only my son, Matt and nephew Patrik but also one of my grandsons Sam on his first major sail. There were two British boats out of the 70 strong fleet.

July 2006 we assembled in Eckernforde in Northern Germany and another great rally.

You will notice that I've made very little reference to the racing at the rallies, the official reason is because there are no entries in my logs for these events, but my friends might think it is something to do with the fact that I invariably finish in the bottom half of the fleet or worse.

However in 2008 I am going to change all that, perhaps!!! The VAGB is hosting the IFR in the Orwell at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club. A crafty combination of distance, tides and lovely mud banks might conceivably give me the chance to move up the results board. Who knows, all I've got to do is discourage as many boats as possible from attending and I may even get a place on the rostrum.

Mike Freeman Vega "Jenavive"

The Vega and the Bicycle

For Melanie and I, two of the pleasures of owning a Vega are seeing new coastal towns and exploring beyond the anchorage. You could use a cab but they can be expensive and not always available. Public Transportation is good only as long you can go where they are going and can wait for the next bus. Walking is great exercise, but can be time consuming, limiting the distance you can cover.

One solution is a folding bicycle. With the addition of “fast releases” and telescoping components, most bikes can be opened and made ready to ride in under two minutes (manufacturers claim under a minute). Storage and removal in the port and starboard locker adds several minutes but even our 26-inch wheel Montague with folding pedals is stored with a minimum of work.

The “perfect” folding bicycle would be lightweight, robust, simple to repair and maintain, easy to set-up, easy to store, fast to ride, comfortable, and resist corrosion. The current crop of folding bicycles fulfills many of these criteria. Internet searches identify many manufacturers but the most commonly known to US sailors are Dahon and Montague. Dahon carries many models and even a “Mariner” model with corrosion resistant fittings. Montague carries only full size (26 inch)(650c) folding bikes. If you are the serious biker and can't be parted from your “Old Reliable”, one US company sells joiners and “quick release” cables that can be installed on your personal bike.

I have divided the style of folding bike into three types based upon the distance that could be comfortably ridden. In my opinion more depends on the size of the wheel than on the gearing.

Wheels less than 20 inches:

If you plan to ride under 3 miles (5 kilometers) then this might be your bike. The problem is distance for energy expended. You don't get much bang for your buck especially uphill. The folded down size and weight are only slightly different compared to the 20-inch wheel. Many of the parts are non-standard and may be limited only to the manufacturer.

I can't get too excited about this size and somehow they always seem to be too small.

20-inch wheels:

This is by far the most common size of folding bike. Everything from very expensive to inexpensive knock-offs of the more popular versions are available. Many options are available such as different gears: One speed (gear), three speed hubs, 5 speed, all the way up to 24 speed derailleurs for all different types of riding. Parts are easily purchased at any bike repair shop or even Wal-Mart. Distances are more easily traveled, but more than 25 miles (45 kilometers) doesn't seem very realistic. On the other hand, Dahon and Girl Friday claims you can easily ride 100 miles (161 km) on their high performance 24-speed models.

Greater than 20 inch Wheels:

This is the other end of the spectrum. There are only a few full-size folding bikes just like there are few “smaller than 20-inch wheel” models. But these are just like your bike at home. You can ride

over 25 miles (45 km) over rolling terrain in under two hours without great effort. Parts are easily obtained and customizing the bike with oversize saddles or high performance tires is limited only by your pocketbook and imagination (handle bar squirrel tails?). Dahon even has a high performance 27 inch (700c) wheel drop handlebar beauty that costs over \$2,000. We personally own one of the inexpensive 26 inch Montague models. I like it, but have spent money and time getting everything just right plus I have upgraded several items. This size is good for a serious rider that loves his Vega. They can be stored in the cockpit lockers with a little angling and effort.

Considerations:

As always the first consideration is not money but use. How far are you going? Over what kind of terrain? How much time and effort do you expend to get there? How often will you be using it? Seriously consider proven corporations over imitations. They have a proven track record. Basic and inexpensive models by the primary corporations are fine for occasional forays. Tires size and type depends on the riding that is planned. The Montague DX has hybrid tires that are supposed to be able to handle gravel and tarmac. I have switched to a road tire but not the narrowest because sometimes we do ride gravel trails. The larger diameter tire means less effort for distance. Gearing makes the traveling easier especially on rolling terrain. The more gears, the easier it is to maintain a good cadence. But the tuning of the rig is harder and a good knock can throw the derailleur out of alignment. You will need to be more skilled at repairs. The Stumey-Archer three speed hub has all its gears inside the hub and therefore no derailleur that is so easy to deform. This has some real advantages but you will walk up the steep hills.

The "Folding Society" has reviewed many models available in the UK.

The second consideration is, of course, money. Quality components cost money. Many designs use the same basic frame but different components to make a road or mountain bike. So this goes back to the first question, what is the desired use? Occasional use or short distances may mean that an inexpensive model with fewer fancy components would be the best choice.

The third consideration is maintenance and components. Too complicated frequently means fragile. And folding bike components needs to be strong and simple. Drop an anchor on a derailleur and you are a pedestrian again. Plus ease of repair should be considered unless you have experience with bike maladies.

The fourth consideration is storage on a Vega. I don't have to tell you fellow Vega owners on the difficulty in finding storage space. However, we have found that the bikes do fit into the lockers. But folding pedals are extremely important because of the narrow lockers.

Our own experiences started with 20-inch wheel steel (heavy) folding bikes that preceded quick releases and it took about 15 minutes to set up because key components like pedals and handlebars had to be reinstalled. They had a 3-speed Stumey-Archer hub and could not handle steep hills. We bought our Montague "DX Crossover" bikes at an end of the season clearance from West Marine. It has 26-inch (650) hybrid tires and 18 gears. The price was right and we were not sure if we would enjoy or even use folding bikes considering the difficulties with the older models. We had to take it to a bike shop to get it adjusted properly because we did not know enough to adjust the

components. Then take it in again after the parts wore and stretched. I can now do some of my own adjustments but it has been a learning experience. But we ride 10-20 miles on an irregular basis and we are not strong riders so the extra gears and larger tires area big help. They are our primary bikes.

Accessories:

A decent helmet is an absolute. Don't leave home without it. They are comfortable and not for wimps. Real men wear helmets, just ask my buddy, Lance.

A bag or case is needed to protect the bike from the boat and vice versa. They can be expensive but worth it.

Folding pedals are one accessory that will make storage much simpler. They function the same as the regular pedals but fold flat to the side of the bike. They really are a necessity for the limited Vega port and starboard cockpit lockers for both the 20 and 26-inch bikes.

Small tool kits, tire repair kit, lock, and pump are needed. Fortunately these items are small and easily stored.

A rear rack and bag are useful but not absolutely needed. A small backpack is almost as useful but not if something heavy is carried.

Good Sailing and Good biking! Paul and Melanie Halvachs of Vega 1826

Vega Double Bow Roller

During the last few months I have been asked many times to show photos of the Double Bow Roller/Chainplate. Well here it is and yes **STILL AVAILABLE** from Vega Spares!!!



£240 Plus Postage
Contact steve@albinvega.com

Voila's Bahamain Rhapsody

This the story, in log form, of our return voyage in Voila. We spent 54 days in the Bahamas. We have made many friends and had a fantastic time. We met with Hans and Kristen on another Vega called **Whisper**. They are on a four year adventure cruise.

Sunday February 3. Green Turtle Cay

The Bahamian Vega Rendezvous has come to a close. Sightseeing, snorkeling, fishing off the beach, dinners on each others boats....The event's schedule changed form hour to hour depending on our mood and the weather. Hans and Kristen of Whisper say their goodbyes. We have been in the Abacos for 54 days. The rendezvous was a culmination of an adventure. Sadly, it is now time to plan Voila's voyage back to Florida. A crossing window has appeared.

Monday Feb 4

It is eight o'clock and it is howling 25 to 30 knots from the north east. The forecast says in two days the wind will diminish and fill in from the east with ten to fifteen knots. This is perfect crossing conditions. We fill our fuel and water tanks. An extra jerry can is filled with fuel and we have enough fuel on board for at least 54 hours of motoring. We leave at 11 o'clock. Two reefs are put in the main and the genoa is rolled out to the forward lower shroud. The boat charges along at hull speed on a close reach. She handles beautifully as she throws spray 8 feet. We see only one other sailboat, motor sailing the in the other direction. We arrive at Allen's-Pensacola at 4:30 pm. It is a fantastic sail. The anchor alarm is set and we go to sleep. An hour later the drag alarm goes off. It is quite spooky as it is pitch black. I have no terms of reference. The only light I can see is the telephone tower in Foxtown over 10 miles away. Somehow we had teleported 150 feet and then back. We had not moved. I think the GPS is confused. Probably the outboard motor on the aft rail is too close to the GPS antenna for a stable reading. We settle in for a quiet sleep.

Tuesday Feb 5 Allen's-Pensacola

Today is my father's birthday. I have no way to wish him happy birthday. We are anchored in a secluded bay on a deserted island. There is an abandoned missile tracking station on shore. This is a lovely island. I should have allowed more time to explore it.

Although the port rail was on the lee side from yesterday's passage we found our starboard rail still leaked. We had taken waves over the bow. It leaked into our electronics bin. An inverter was fried but luckily our camera and ipod were in their bags.

We start early on the final leg to Florida. We have lighter winds of 10 to 15 from the north east and broad reaching. I finally get the time to set up and use the Navik self steering. It works very well until we go too far off the wind and it starts to wander. I set the autopilot and set off to Mantanilla shoal. We pass by Walkers Cay. I wish I could have visited. It is written up in the latest National Geographic.

Wednesday Feb 6 and Feb 7

We carefully review the weather forecast. A big window for a crossing with 2 foot waves in the Gulf Stream and an east wind 10 - 15 knots. Nice and easy sail. They lie! We have planned to go to Matinilla Shoal and then onto a midnight crossing to Fort Pierce. All is well when we arrive at the shoal. There is no wind. We start our crossing. Pretty smooth... Then we come to the Gulf Stream. It is like being in a washing machine with 6 foot seas. There is little pattern to the waves and are close together. Felicity gets a little green. Well, a lot green. I put a settee cushion on the sole and Felicity wedges herself in. The shackles for the boom downhaul and boom vang became loose and fall apart. The soda pop cans develop pinholes and leak from all the rolling. I manage but I become very tired. I have been up for more than 24 hours. We motor for what seems to be forever. I see the shore around 9:00 am. We fight south to get to Fort Pierce. We make no headway against the Gulf Stream. We have drifted too far south. I talk to the Coast Guard who inform me the Gulf Stream western wall is 12 miles out. I am blubbing but they are a big help. We are at 16 miles. The wind picks up from the north east. I roll out the genoa and we leebow to shore straight west. What a difference to get out of the stream! We are home free and enter a very easy inlet. We arrive at 12:30 in the afternoon. I am exhausted. Felicity is dehydrated as well as exhausted. We have a nap for two hours and then phone in to customs and immigration. Not much of a welcome but we are elated to be in smooth water. We sleep a deep dreamless sleep.

Thursday Feb 8

The marina graciously let us tie up to their wharf. We catch a cab to clear customs. Clearing US customs is a story by itself. Nineteen dollars later we have our cruising permit. We are now legally in the US.

What we did wrong.....

Do not underestimate the Gulf Stream. We were never in any danger but the crossing was uncomfortable. I would like to be in the Gulf Stream in daylight. Our first instinct to wait at Mangrove Cay, further south would have been the right choice. We would have stayed overnight at Mangrove Cay while waiting for the seas to calm down. From here we would have gone to Memory Rock and onto Fort Pierce. This would have allowed us a much easier ride on the current as we were further south. The seas would have been almost flat and even though it was further it may have taken the same amount of time.

Alan & Felicity Critchlow Vega "Voila" V1639

The VAGB Solent Bash 2007

(Friday 24th August – Sunday 26th August)

The event will be organised and hosted by the **Fareham Sailing & Motor Boat Club**, to whom the VAGB extends its thanks

The famous **Vega Solent Cup** will once more be up for grabs. This cup has been raced for since 1976. There will be the traditional **Predicted Log Event** over the same course for those unwilling, or unable, to race. Of course you are allowed to enter both events.

Usual sailing rules (Fareham Sailing Club) apply for the **Vega Solent Cup Race** and the Portsmouth Yardstick will be used. The **Umpire's decision will be final**

Assembly

Friday 24th Aug (HW 20:07). Visiting Vegas to assemble at **Haslar Marina**. This is a superb place to start the weekend.

Saturday 25th Aug (HW 09:00). Both classes to assemble off **Gilkicker Point** for a prompt start at 11:00

Course: Gilcker – Hardway Marine Buoy (P) – Bob Kemps Buoy (P) – No Man's Land Fort (S) – Bembridge Ledge Buoy (P) – Transit of Main Passage (Submarine Barrier). The course may be adjusted or revised at the discretion of the Race Officer.

The Evening Event will be held at Fareham Sailing Club with a barbeque or American Supper (everyone chips in). There is a dedicated barbeque area at the club and plenty of free berthing available (Our thanks to FSMBC again!). Hopefully all will be at Salterns Pontoons as in previous years. There is a great bar with cheap beer and a wonderful atmosphere. The prize-giving will be held during the evening for both events. Remember to bring a small prize donation (value of £10 ish) for the **Predicted Log Event** (That way everyone goes home a winner!).

Sunday 26th Aug (HW 10:15). Fleet disperses

All HW times refer to Portsmouth

Any queries then please contact :

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Steve Birch (VAGB) – 01684 568676 07831 846997 steve@albinvega.com

Obituary

Roger Evill

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you all of the sad death of Roger. He was a great friend and helped many Vega owners around the UK. His expertise on the dreaded "Combi" will be sorely missed as will his skill on getting the most from sail-trim on the Vega. We will print his famous Sail Trim article in the next newsletter.

Anyone that had the pleasure of meeting Roger will know the generosity he extended to everyone and all he asked in return were your thanks and perhaps a bottle of decent scotch!

Our thoughts and condolences go to Rose, his wife, and the rest of his family

**Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate,
As they voyage along through life;
'Tis the will of the soul
That decides its goal,
And not the calm or the strife**

Make your Beta better.....

When I fitted my new Beta engine in 2000 I was charmed with every aspect of it, I even cleaned the belt dust off at regular intervals. Compared with the old Volvo and it's combi gear the Beta was a sheer delight, it started at the touch of a button even after the winter layoff. It actually made manoeuvring in astern easier and more predictable. I never had to lift the cockpit floor and fish around below my feet with the grease gun only to find the grease oozing out into the engine tray. In fact I have to remind myself to lift the cockpit floor from time to time just to make sure everything is OK.

The Beta could do no wrong, I was in love with a diesel engine. Then as our relationship developed I began to discover or imagine little faults, the cooling water anode which dissolves over the course of a season, the contortions necessary to change the fuel filter etc. I was discussing these points with my relationship counsellor Steve Birch at one of our sailing therapy sessions. He persuaded me that the problems I had were minor ones that happened in even the best relationships and that he could cure the fuel filter location problem for me for a start. Indeed on later engines the modification has already been made. After a short while I received from Beta a kit for relocating the fuel filter on the front of the engine by the stop solenoid. The kit consists of a new filter bracket and fixings plus the new filter and necessary fuel pipe and clips.

Last month I fitted the new kit, the bracket bolted on with no trouble at all, I did worry a bit as to which outlet from the filter was the in and which the out but finally decided that the centre spigot was fuel in and the outer one fuel out.

There are three bolts holding the pump in position. The fuel filter just screwed off but remember its full of fuel so have a receptacle handy. The pipes in and out of the old filter screw off without problem. The new pipes were cut to length and laid neatly along the starboard side of the engine. I secured them together with a couple of cable ties.

During the job I noticed the bracket holding throttle cable had worked loose so tightened this at the same time. Access along the starboard side of the engine is now much easier and of course the fuel and oil filters are now both easily accessible from the front of the engine. This was an ideal opportunity to check all the linkages etc that are rarely thought about during the standard yearly engine service.

I am now looking forward to trying my new layout when I launch in April. My relationship with my engine is now back on track..... I can thoroughly recommend it.

Mike Freeman Vega "Jenavive" V1768

BETA INSTALLATION V1842 'FAIRWINDS'

(This was the first time I had done anything like this – my speciality is computers, not engines – so if I can do it anyone can)

The Beginning

After putting up with our smoky old Volvo for three years – maximum sustained speed 3 knots with regular stops for overheating, and of course the Combi with no neutral, no low revs thrust in reverse and the joys of servicing the beast periodically – it was time to give Fairwinds a new engine.

With so many Beta installations already in place and the wealth of expertise available from VAGB in the person of Steve Birch there was no doubt which engine we would go for. On the basis of not spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar we ordered the BZ472 engine, Morse control, propshaft, centaflex flexible coupling, varifold folding prop, Volvo 'blackjack' stern seal and control panel with rev counter and temperature gauge and awaited delivery while reading through the installation instructions.

The engine arrived in March. The artic it was on was too big to get across the bridge onto Seil, so we went to meet it in a small hatchback and three of us managed to lift the engine on its transport pallet into the back of the car quite easily. It looked very red and shiny but at first we worried it was the 10HP and not the BZ482 as it didn't have a sump pump as shown in all the Beta literature. Don't worry – the VAGB engines apparently come without a sump pump now – it is not necessary as there is plenty of clearance to get a tray under for oil changes.

The old engine had already been removed along with the combi and stern gear and all the piping and wiring – a clean sweep. All I can say on this point is, make sure EVERYTHING is disconnected before lifting the old engine on the crane. (I tried to lift the whole boat twice, once by an engine mounting bolt and once by the engine stop cable!). Once the engine room was empty and clean I installed new soundproofing (top of the range Halyard – the facing on the cheaper stuff tears easily so oil can get into the foam behind). I bought two sheets and enough adhesive for about £125)

I had ordered new bearer plates from Steve – although I could have got these locally they were cheap enough and one less problem to worry about. I painted them with some strange sort of rust-beating paint – Hammerite would probably be most people's choice – and set about bolting them onto the existing engine bearers. Not being confident in my precision measuring, I made two plywood templates first. Once I was happy with these I took them and the steel plates to a friend who has a pillar drill and he drilled the holes. I then bolted the plates down to the original bearers.

The engine was lifted into the boat using the yard crane, although it could probably be done with the mainsheet and boom if you were careful. I have even heard of the engine being carried up a ladder, although I didn't fancy it. We lowered the engine through the companionway and sat it on two pieces of wood on the saloon sole, then rigged up the mainsheet tackle from a pole over the hatchway. Using this it was easy to lift the engine then slide it forward onto the bearers.

The Alignment Story

Now the bit I had been dreading – lining the engine up. The flexible coupling was attached to the gearbox and the propshaft inserted in the stern tube and centred using the alignment cones lent to us by Steve. The flexible coupling makes alignment the traditional way using feeler gauges between the two flanges problematical, so I sought advice from others who had passed this way before. The entrance to the flexible coupling has a slight bevel to it. If the shaft hits this bevel when you slide it into the coupling there will be a double click as it slides home. Adjust the engine from side to side on the bearers and up and down using the adjustable feet until the shaft clicks home with a single click and you can't see any movement of the coupling as you slide it home.

Once I was happy with the alignment I marked the position of the holes for bolting the engine down prior to removing the bearers and taking them back to my friend to have the new holes drilled and tapped. At this stage though I lost my nerve and decided to have a 'professional' align the engine for me. This turned out to be a big mistake. When I went back down to the yard the engine was bolted firmly in place and out of alignment by nearly half the diameter of the shaft – the forward alignment cone had apparently not been used, so what the engine had been aligned with was a mystery! I

slackened all the bolts and worked for an hour or so until I had got the engine lined up again. It was not made any easier by the fact that the guy who had done it had used 10mm bolts in 10mm holes, not leaving any room for adjustment – Steve recommends using 10mm holes and 8mm bolts for this reason.

When I mentioned this to the ‘engineer’ he seemed annoyed that I had redone his work, and said that final alignment cannot be done until the boat is in the water. I found this unlikely with a small stiff boat like the Vega, but he is the professional so I invited him to come and check the alignment when the boat was in the water. Jumping ahead to that time now, he turned up at the pontoon some months later when the boat was launched, slackened all the bolts and writhed around for an hour or so.

When he said it was done I fired up the engine and put it in gear. Water began to leak round the stern seal, and when I removed it (safe to do in the water with the Vega solid stern bearing – only a trickle gets up the shaft, of which more later) the shaft was almost touching one side of the stern tube. I was pretty annoyed by now. I rushed home to get the forward alignment cone and then supervised as the alignment was once again fixed, checking the final alignment myself. This guy cost me nearly £300 and didn’t have a clue – if I hadn’t checked his work I would have had half an inch or more of misalignment. The moral of this story is trust yourself, it isn’t rocket science and you can do it. Our engine has now run like a sewing machine for nearly 300 hours after finally being aligned by me using the ‘one click’ technique described above.

(Of course, if you are not using a flexible coupling then I would advise using the traditional method of a feeler gauge between the two flanges as you rotate the propshaft)

Fuel

I had taken out the fuel tank and removed all the old copper fuel pipes. The tank was steam cleaned inside and painted outside before being reinstalled with a new gasket on the inspection plate. I got the fuel-resistant nitrile rubber to make the gasket from Ebay. I used 8mm flexible fuel hose – make sure it is the right stuff with the BS mark, not the cheaper transparent stuff. How to attach the fuel hoses to the tank outlet was a problem, but I managed to get push-on 8mm gas fittings that attached to the old fittings on the inspection plate. There is some special blue gunge that can be used to seal diesel fittings.

Work out the hose runs first before cutting anything and remember to buy and fit a primary fuel filter/water separator (CAV or similar). This posed a problem in itself as the CAV filter doesn’t come with any fittings to attach fuel hose to it. I had an incredible job finding suitable fittings, but eventually an agricultural engineer came up trumps. Save yourself a lot of time and go to a tractor place first for this sort of thing!

One thing I forgot to do was fit a fuel cut-off tap – essential if you want to be able to change the fuel filters without making a mess!

Exhaust

I bought 40mm flexible exhaust hose from the chandlers. This is not cheap. You will need two lengths, one from the manifold to the water trap and one from the water trap to the swan neck. The swan neck can just be a loop of hose which rises as high as possible above the waterline – this means buying a little more hose but saves on the purchase of another expensive bit of plastic from Vetus. Make sure you calculate the amount you will need correctly and err on the generous side as it will be expensive if you get a few inches too little!

The 40mm hose is quite a bit too big for the outlet manifold on the engine, which worried me until I looked at a couple of other installations. Use two jubilee clips and it will work just fine. I positioned the Vetus LP40 water lock beside the rudder tube and tie-wrapped it in place – it should be as low as possible. As already mentioned, I used a loop of hose immediately before the exhaust through-hull instead of a swan neck.

The other part of the exhaust system is the vented loop on the water injection pipe. This was a pain. I couldn't source the right ID hose locally, and eventually got a length from Beta. It wasn't expensive and arrived in a couple of days. The plastic bit from Vetus was nearly £50 for something that looks as though it comes out of a lucky bag, but if it prevents water flooding your engine then I guess it is worth it. (Although water has already got to have got past the swan neck and the water trap for this to come into play as far as I can see). The vented loop should be sited as high as possible; I managed to bolt it to the aft side of the port bulkhead, but running the two hoses to it was not an easy job as the hose was semi-rigid and couldn't be bent too much. I used a length of copper tube at one point to stop the rubber hose collapsing.

Wiring

The engine wiring itself is very straightforward - You need a thick earth to the engine. Just choose a nice bolt in a convenient place and attach it there. Make sure you sand the paint off for a good connection then cover with vaseline or similar afterwards. The thick live needs to be attached to the outside connection on the starter solenoid (above the starter).

The hassles all revolved around wiring the special control panel Steve had built for us. The temperature gauge needed a different sender, which proved difficult to identify but easy to source (from Beta) once we knew which one it was. The tacho needed a connection to the alternator as it was not wired into the loom on our engine. I have no doubt that this would be a lot easier for someone with a bit more electrical nous, but for me it was a steep learning curve.

Morse Control

This was enormous fun. The instructions were diagrammatic and not easy to follow, and as installation involved crawling into the starboard cockpit locker (which already contains the fuel tank on Fairwinds) it would have been nice to get it right first time. Oh no – fourth attempt. First I connected the gear linkage to the throttle and vice versa. Next I routed them wrongly. Finally the

length was wrong and I had to move them to the alternate position. (I know this is a bit vague, but look at it before you fit it and hopefully you will see what I mean and not make the same mistakes). What about the fourth time I hear you say – well, that came after launch. The lever went forwards for reverse and vice versa. I had suspected this but failed to read the gearbox manual carefully enough, so it was back into the locker. Perhaps I am just daft, but hopefully this little tale will save someone else some hassle and embarrassment.

Stern Gear

The prop shaft will need to be cut to length. (Don't make it too short – measure three times, cut once). This took a while but was much easier than I thought with a reasonable hacksaw. It was then smoothed off with a slight bevel using a file and emery paper. We were fitting a Volvo dripless 'blackjack' sternseal, so it was important that the end of the shaft was very smooth.

We fitted a new stern bearing, using emery paper to enlarge it slightly until it would just slip down the shaft under its own weight. I think that I could have made it a slightly slacker fit, as not much water gets up the stern tube and the shaft seal runs a little hot. Fitting the Varifold prop was very easy – good instructions make all the difference.

Minor Problems

The Volvo stern seal runs a little hot and is hard to get water through when you 'burp' it, but it is still dripless and I stopped worrying after Nigel Good told me he hadn't got any water through his for the first year but has had no problems since. The answer is probably to ream out the stern bearing a little more.

We had a problem once when the starter jammed on due to a sticky ignition switch on the control panel – regular applications of WD40 are required. A bit alarming as it took us a few seconds to realise what was happening – massive battery discharge, a strange noise and the solenoid stop switch failing to stop the engine.

Neither of these are really anything to do with the engine itself though, and both are easily solved.

The Result?

Perfect. A smooth running trouble free installation that has already done nearly 300 hours. We cruise at 2100 rpm at 5 knots in smooth water or 2200 at 5.4 knots, but the engine has also been run flat out (3600 rpm) for over four hours in very big head seas as we battled our way to windward into Porto Santo in the tail end of a storm. There is no doubt that it has changed the boat completely, and that our cruise of the Canaries would not have been possible without it.

Nick Bowles Vega "Fairwinds" V1842

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