

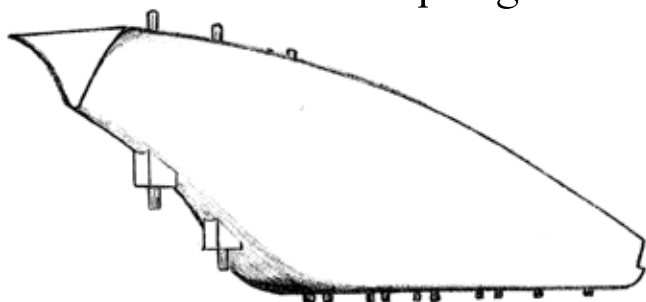


STELLA

SPRING 2010

STELLA NEWSLETTER

Spring 2010



Wooden pattern for the Stella keel. Drawn by Ted Terry.

CONTENTS

Chairman's message by Trevor Spero.

The Stella: older than sex? Blather by the editor.

Racing Reports by a wide variety of correspondents.

Comings and goings, boat movements by Sebastian King.

Estrella Takes it to the toffs: Steve Meakin on the BCYC regatta.

Stella Maintenance: John Sparks' advice corner.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

IT is hard to believe that Winter is nearly over and that Spring is just around the corner. I am waiting for 4 continuous days with temperatures above 10 degrees before I am willing to start work on Stella Lyra even though she is sitting in a watertight but unheated shed in Maldon. I must be getting old as I always managed before in the open air.

I hope all of you have got through the winter in good spirits and are looking forward to Spring and launching the Stellas. Owning a Stella is not for the faint hearted as they do need love and cherishing as well as a lot of hard work. Once they are launched and become live under your feet all the work is worthwhile.

I salute all the owners who put so much effort in to keeping them looking so good after 50 years of sailing. They are special boats and we are the custodians of a bit of sailing history. I might be a bit biased but I think the Stella is probably the best pleasure value per pound that you will ever spend. They arouse admiration and envy wherever they go and there are few boats that sail so safely and well in all conditions. No plastic boat will ever compare so remember that when you are busy preparing her for the season.

We are welcoming a number of new and enthusiastic members to the Stella Association and I wish them safe sailing and fair winds. I am sure you will make lots of new friends. All members should feel free to contact any of our committee if they need any help or advice.

Our new STELLA workshop manual written by John Sparks is available free to all members and having studied it carefully, I think he has done a wonderful and detailed job covering all aspects of Stella Maintenance. Well done John.

Our new committee has arranged a number of events for those who can get to them, mainly on the east coast. We look forward to seeing you there, but for members with boats too distant, we would like to involve you and your Stellas via e-mail and the website.

We do want to see pictures of your boats and to hear about all the super sailing areas where you live. Can I please ask you all to take a few minutes to e mail me with any Photos and stories of Stella interest.

If you have problems tell us about them we might be able to help. If you win the local club races we want to know. We on the East Coast are doing our best to keep the Stella name in the forefront of the ClassicYacht scene by having the biggest fleet and winning the events.

I take this opportunity of thanking you for your continued support of the Stella Yachts and being a member of the exclusive Stella Class Association.

Trevor Spero

Maldon March 2010



Stellas make you smile! A wet Wednesday at Mersea Week: Sue Clifford in Stella Peacock, photo Alan Jones

Published by the Stella Class Association

Chairman, Trevor Spero; chairman@stellasail.org.uk

Secretary, Frances Maggs; secretary@stellasail.org.uk

Treasurer & Suffolk Rivers, John Marks; treasurer@stellasail.org.uk

Racing, Alan Jones; racing@stellasail.org.uk

Class Rules, Tom Taylor-Jones; classrules@stellasail.org.uk

Website, Sebastian King; webmaster@stellasail.org.uk

Newsletter & Crouch Rep, Ed Maggs;

publicity@stellasail.org.uk

Blackwater & Colne Rep, Peter Haldane;

blackwatercolne@stellasail.org.uk

Suffolk Rivers, John Sparks; 01473 788186

Correspondence to:

1 The Quay

Burnham-on-Crouch

Essex CM0 8AS

Cover illustration: when Stellas were black and white - Stella Nova

THE STELLA: OLDER THAN SEX?

"Sexual intercourse began in 1963
Which was rather late for me
Between the end of the Chatterley
ban
And the Beatles first LP"

Philip Larkin

Many fifty year-olds say that life only begins with a half century under the belt. The Stella had a stropy youth, with many complaints about its behaviour followed by a fecund early middle age (108 offspring, excluding migrant grandchildren in Australia) and has now emerged into its full maturity, vigorous, handsome, and popular. Well, maybe not so popular with handicap fleets, who we still regularly annoy.

In Cornwall, Holland, Denmark, Scotland, the Solent and of course their spiritual homeland of the East Coast rivers, they still inspire devotion and affection from scores of loving owners. We know the pain of wet-sanding in the rain, of paying yard-bills, of the terror of the as-yet unfamiliar boat-building manoeuvre going wrong, but we also know the wellbeing that is the reward for looking after these lovely things. Whether it's the stolen glances, looking back at the mooring as we leave, or the glow as she emerges from her winter quarters, blinking in the spring sunshine, her new paint unfaded and varnish fresh. We get so used to people getting their cameras out as we sail by that we no longer notice it, considering it as part of our due. To understate the case, they really are very attractive boats: there is no unflattering angle to view them from; nothing is exaggerated, their sense of purpose and rightness places them in the real world. They're not precious lady-like toys, but tough little girls: a bit more Dickies boilersuit than Chanel trouser suit. I'm lucky enough to live in Burnham, a couple of hundred yards from where so many of them were built, and as I write this have just returned from hearing a local retired shipwright, not Ted Terry whose lovely drawings illustrate this issue, but Peter Pearson, who speaks with love of the culture of hard work and honest labour that produced the Stellas and their contemporaries. I love the Stellas in particular because they came right at the end of this tradition: nearly a hundred years of yacht building that was to be extinguished almost overnight.

The limelight in their birthday year may have been hogged by the racing, but the most of us continued to cruise, potter, weekend, bumble and tweak them. As small as a Stella feels in the middle of the North Sea it feels big tacking out of Pottton Creek at low water! The newsletter and website would love to have more cruising accounts

harbour.

Tom located a wren to the ammeter overheating at a joint and arrangements were made with a garage to recharge the battery.

Went ashore for stores. Port Patrick a pleasant little place but hardly looking its best in the west. Ashore to the Cross Keys in the evening.

THURSDAY 13th JULY, 1972

All rose late after a good long sleep.

A fine hot day, somewhat plagued by flies.

Jilda and Nora went to sample the pleasures of Stranraer.

The day passed lazily. Pete Norman, Colin Harold went swimming in a cove just to the north of Port Patrick.

All plugs were cleaned and two new ones obtained.

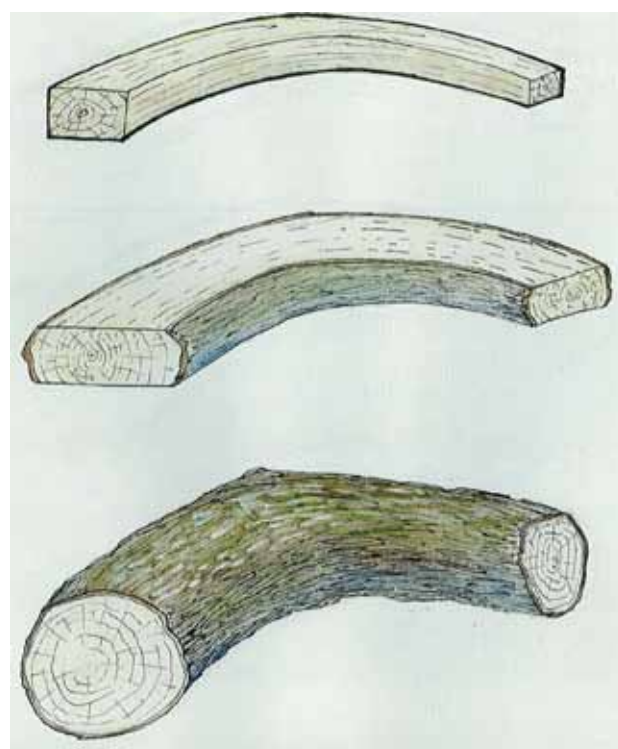


from members, with logs if available.

We have been sent scans of drawings from the log of Myra, a page from which we reproduce above: am I the only skipper to consistently fail to keep any more record than anxious plots on charts? Send us more - we will use them.

In this issue we are particularly pleased to have an extract from the tremendous maintenance manual produced by John Sparks, of professional quality. His experience of maintaining his own Stella for 20 years is eloquently and clearly expounded in his substantial paper, which is downloadable to members only on the website (or send us a fiver for a paper copy). The Stella's a simple machine, but it has quite a few components: learn about them here, and about how to keep them going.

The small illustrations throughout the text are from Ted Terry's unpublished manuscript on building Stellas. We still hope to be able to publish the entire manuscript - it is a unique and very special thing. Opposite we see his drawing of the woodern pattern that was used to cast the keels, below, oak shown in its transition from Epping Forest to Stella.



THE 2009 STELLA WORLDS



A start at the Suffolk Classic Yacht Regatta

As in previous years, the competition for top Stella in their 50th anniversary year was spread over three regattas. The Suffolk Classic Yacht Regatta, based at Levington Marina, is a really wonderful event, and was deservedly popular again. The mooring is cheap, the sailing water excellent and reasonably close to hand, the social side pleasantly low-key, and the organisation admirable. With our own start, the Stellas had sixteen on the line at the gun (or somewhere near the line, at sometime close to the gun), and had the pleasure of being overhauled by some wonderful yott totty. Particularly worth ogling were the 8 metre *If*, the famous Buchanan *Vashti*, and the unfeasibly elegant West Solent and East Coast One Designs. The event was dominated by Richard Matthews in *Scorpio*, celebrating his completion of the deal of the century, the sale of Oyster Marine, for a reported £70,000,000. On the Sunday, a race with a big calm patch in the middle of it, he was home so far ahead of the rest of us that he was tied up and helicoptering back to West Mersea before we had re-entered the harbour.

There is a serious racing side to this regatta, but it's by no means high pressure, and even the less competitive had a memorable weekend. The relaxed nature of the racing away from the front of the fleet was summed up for me by the nameless crew who hoisted their spinnaker the wrong way up, (hands up anyone who's never done that), but who thought it looked quite nice like that and left it up anyway. If you thought about it but didn't come in 2009, then let us urge you to try it in 2010. Matthews won with three firsts, with a very creditable second overall from *Vreny* ahead of Neil Pitman's *Rollicker*, driven by Mick Willett.

Mersea week gave us five days of really sparkling sailing, with the principal opposition to Matthews coming from himself. He came spectacularly unstuck shortly after the start of one race, launching himself at speed up the inside of the bar at the entrance to Goldhanger Creek while short tacking up the North side of the Blackwater. Many hours of patience to get out of that one, and on his home water too! Apart from that discard, he scored straight wins again, ahead of *Estrella* and *Stella Peacock*, and gave us a grand barbeque on the Wednesday evening.

Burnham Week was a vigorous coda to the season: big winds and rather brutal courses: "The Bard of Creeksea" wrote the following report:

The winds were brisk all weekend, and the courses as demanding as Burnham Week regulars have come to expect. "Vlissingen number one, port; Outer Scheveningen, starboard; Crouch Gate" came over the radio in my lurid nightmares after Saturday's five hours, which was followed by an epic nine hour Stella barbecue.

Nine Stellas met at Burnham to duke it out for the title of World Champion in the final round. In truth the title had been settled already, with the legendary Richard Matthews' *Scorpio* scoring a bilgeful of one-pointers at



West Mersea - *Polaris*, *Stella Lyra* & *Estrella*. Photo, Martin Wade

Levington and West Mersea, despite parking up spectacularly on his home water, but the competition for top boat this weekend was wide open.

No one makes money betting against Mick Willett in a Stella on the Crouch, and although he no longer has *Polaris* to hand, he drove the perennially cheerful Neil Pitman's *Rollicker* to the winner's podium with two firsts and a second. With no discards over the three races, you had to be in it to win it, and the boatspeed and handling of the lightweight flyers *Scorpio* and *Estrella* (Tom Taylor-Jones) was for nothing, as navi-guessing errors cost them a race each. In the first Taylor-Jones made a spirited attempt to claim that leaving a passing mark to the wrong side qualified for a 2% time penalty since there was no material advantage, which gambit failed,



to the relief of Ed & Fran Maggs in *Polaris*, who self-diagnosed the same mistake and went back (it took a very long time).

The dark horse of the whole series was Alan Jones' *Stella Peacock*, very fetching in her buttermilk livery and shocking pink kite. Only once counting more than four, he sailed every race of the series, was always there or thereabouts and only lost second place overall on countback to the sporadically brilliant *Estrella*. It could of course have been any one point over the series that finished it, but one can't help thinking of the epic struggle on the last beat (admittedly a six mile foul tide beat) between *Rollicker* and *Peacock* on the Monday. *Rollicker* went right in to play with the seals on the Maplin shore while Alan stayed on the rhumb line, but it didn't work and *Peacock* still had a couple of lengths in hand at the Gate. Like cage fighters they slugged it out side by side Willett gradually finding inch after inch of speed, to finally ride over them to weather.

On Saturday Roger Reid's *Persephone* found the fast button upwind and shot back into the Crouch to score a third in that race, her best of the weekend, although she wasn't to trouble the scorers over the rest of the regatta.

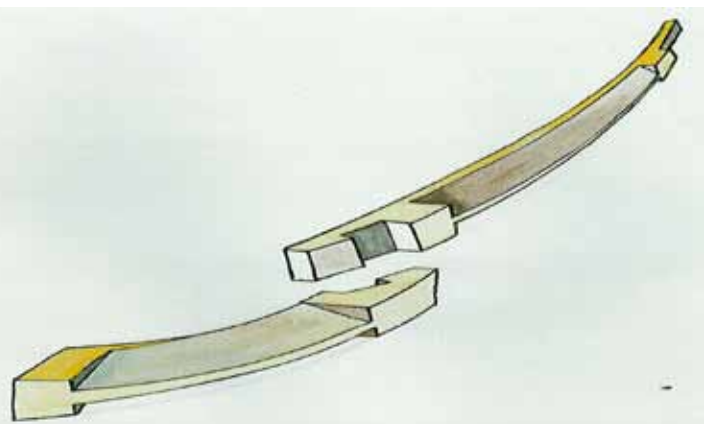
Polaris with her crack Sydney crew (lions led by a donkey?), bolstered for one race by Noel Stanbury, showed good downwind speed at times, but they still have to learn how to take Stellas uphill and depended for their third for the weekend on the kindness of others.

Vreny couldn't recapture her Levington form, having left their nine month old tactician AJ Gregory in

Scorpio at Burnham, looking every inch the scratch boat his pram this weekend. *Stardust* had problems that kept her indoors for the first two days before adding to the spectacle on Monday.

Polaris alone stayed on for the week, battling through Big Tuesday (30 knots) and Fat Friday (40 knots), rather gratifyingly picking up the midweek points against a *Contessa* who couldn't handle the big winds.

Matthews accepted the overall gong at the CYC prizegiving, entertaining the audience with beautifully delivered accounts of great *Stella* moments from the past.



Hook scarf, joining the stem and keel. Ted Terry

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Sebastian King, Boatfinder General



Simon Baker and family at the Heybridge lock in 2009

Simon Baker has moved Pied Piper from West Mersea to Titchmarsh Marina, Walton, citing ease of access as the main reason, which with his young family in tow makes perfect sense. Indeed Walton Backwaters could be a good venue for a picnic event some time in the future.

Find of the year has to be Seraphin, long since off our radar. Now owned by Eric Torkilsden she is now kept at Burnham (on-Sea, not on-Crouch). She was the unfortunate star of a YouTube video nasty (google “sinking yacht burnham”), when she had an aborted launching last year. Some of us will know this sinking feeling all too well, self included, but nevertheless don’t watch the video (let alone follow up the other links the search will show you) unless you have a strong stomach. Anyway, Seraphin now floats properly and Eric is considering racing her this season.

Vega of Burnham is still the only Danish Stella and is still in the hands of David Pearce, who keeps her in Frederikssund: it would be lovely to have something from him on the pleasures of the Baltic.

Starfox, long based in the Lake District, is now up in Scotland. She called in to Ardrishaig boatyard for repairs, where she keeps no 45 Zara company. Once repairs are completed she will be based at Gareloch, with her new owners commuting from south London (!) for some excellent weekend sailing.

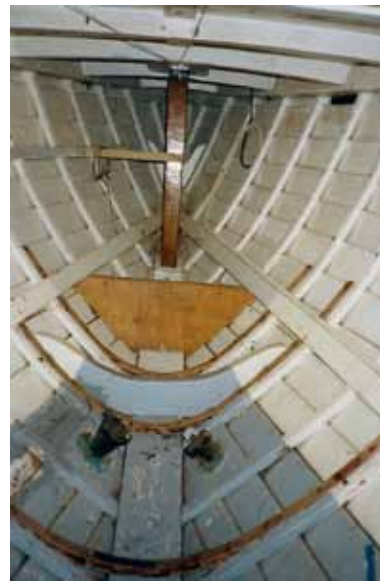
Scampi was trucked from Maldon to Conyer Creek in Kent for restoration, and is now owned by member Alan Johnson, of Wilkinson Sails. Alan intends to have her afloat this season and hopes to join in some Stella events the other side of the Thames estuary, passport permitting.

Shimmer was bought last year by father and son team Herbert & Bill Humphrey, and is now based on the Deben. I am told Bill is a former boatbuilder at Whisstock’s yard in Woodbridge, so we can expect an immaculate looking boat at this year’s SYH regatta.

Rebuilds continue. Both Toucan and Stella Munter have been withdrawn from sale and are being rebuilt by their current owners, Bob Stevenson with Toucan in Dundee and Alan Warner in West Mersea with Stella Munter.

Aquarius has been bought by John Irving, who lives in Norwich but who intends to keep the boat on the Alde, so no change there. Her previous owner, Jonathan T has downsized to a Tumlare, which we can all admire at Levington.

What of the Dutch Stellas? Scatty has recently been sold, and the Stella spies found this out before her previous owner did! Fokko promises to send on details once he has found out from the brokers! Welcome news of Scarlet elsewhere in this issue, but nothing from Sung Foon. Sal Colpaert sold Carina a couple of years ago, and her current owner is unknown. However, she is known to be still in Veere, and is in immaculate condition. As several Stellas are likely to sail to Veere this coming season perhaps you could persuade her owner to contact the association?



Scarlet, in restoration in Holland aged, but will be repaired. Ian’s other Stella, Vanella (85), is now in the hands of Archie Tyrell, who keeps her at Tongue on the Isle of Lewis.

Another boat in danger of going missing is Timoa (91), last heard of in Cornwall, emails being unanswered. There is also a Stella that was broken up at Sutton’s Boatyard a couple of years ago. This only came to light recently, and so we don’t know exactly which one it was, although possible candidates are Galaxy (9) or Pegasus (79), both unheard of for quite some time but last based Burnham-on-Crouch about ten years ago.

Is anyone planning a holiday in Cyprus this year? If you are, take a look around Larnaca Marina and see if Orion (107) is still there. If she is, leave a note asking the owner to contact us. Letters to her last known owner have so far gone unanswered.

Lastly, a very sad story. Formidable (no. 12, Row-hedge built), ended up in a barn about ten years ago for complete restoration. This was duly completed to near perfectionist standard, taking over 6000 man hours spread over a number of years. Two weeks before her intended launch in 2006 a drunken arsonist set the barn alight, and Formidable with it. Nothing remained except the keel, and the boat was not insured. I think we can all join him in silent sympathy for his tragedy.

Arjen Dijkstra has sold Spica (87), formerly D-Day, to Bas Cloo. Not to be confused with the other Spica (88), Tony Pringuer’s immaculately restored boat! We look forward to hearing from Bas in the near future.

Up in Scotland, Ian Stephen sold Moonspinner (105) to a new owner in Gareloch. She is ashore dam-

aged, but will be



photo: Chris Boynton

TAKING IT TO THE TOFFS.

Steve Meakin in Cowes.

Steve Meakin, owner of Flamingo, sailed on *Estrella* in the British Classic Yacht Regatta in Cowes last July. It was the first time that the BCYC had extended the invitation down to boats under 30 foot, and *Estrella* was a notable ambassador for the class, impressing everyone with their boat-handling and speed. Here is an extract from his excellent article on the experience.

Monday dawned blowing old boots and as we headed out at 10:30 for the start I was feeling decidedly rough. Lacking any energy and struggling to stand up on a very wet foredeck wasn't the best place to be and a mistake with the kite highlighted this crewman's shortcomings. That said we managed a fourth in class and had I been a little more on the ball I'm sure we could have added the race to the overall trophy haul.

Tuesday was ladies race and unsurprisingly there wasn't a queue of ladies lined up requesting to race on a little old *Stella* especially as there were classic big yachts everywhere to pick from. Late in the day Bag Puss cleared a fur ball and went off to find us a lady. When he returned he had in tow a certain quarter ton cup racer and so Ladies Race was a go go go. Louise turned out to be an excellent helm and it was great to have another person onboard who really knew her stuff. A great race unfolded despite the near gale blowing and we were doing very well and very much in first place on handicap until approaching the line off the Royal Yacht Squadron when we fell into a complete calm. We stopped dead and watched the boats in front of us race away unaffected by this wind hole. That's racing I guess, but having raced a flawless race it was very frustrating to watch the lead fall

away and so we had to settle for third place.

Thursday was the day all came good - Round the island race. Again yours truly was feeling like death although by now I couldn't work out whether this was down to the ale or flu or even both! Anyway, this was it and this really was the big one. Again Bag Puss went off hunting and came back with crew which given the weather conditions was a great result. James proved to be a top guy with a good understanding of the Solent and this proved a real asset to the Skipper. Round the Island is a long race and with a force 6 blowing is no fun in a small boat. That said the skipper was completely 'dialled in' and I don't think we put a foot wrong. The BCYC sent us around the Americas Cup route and so we went round the island clockwise and it was a long old beat. We took a huge amount of water over the decks - there was such a confused sea as it was a lee shore and the sea was bouncing back off the island creating the strangest conditions I've ever seen. At one stage whilst sat out on the rail I looked down and there was nothing there. It was as if we had launched off a wave and were flying through the air. The other interesting thing during that stage of the race was the fact that I floated more times than I can remember whilst sat out on the rail. There was so much water my entire lap was engulfed in water - not fun for five hours! Rounding the Needles was a great experience as it was my first time round. We went close keeping in mind that you have to imagine the lighthouse laying on its side in order to avoid the wreck that lies off the Needles just below the water. Safely around it was time to fly the kite.....this was a step too far! After no time at all after hoisting the kite we broached and it all got very lively. Bag Puss was coming back from the foredeck and I remember looking at him thinking Bag Puss is stood on the mast...but still not looking overly animated!

Anyway, we spilled the wind from the main and got

her up again and trundled off managing 10 knots through the water. Seemingly only seconds later we broached again and then a third time. The fourth time it was fairly normal and I started to enjoy myself – at least I wasn't sat out on the rail getting wet. The fifth broach was not good as there was a bang and that was the end of the spinnaker. Fortunately it was the old kite but even so I felt for the skipper. We got the old one up just as we came across the outfalls in the Solent and that's where the sea really got up. I was stood in the companion way looking back wondering when we were going to lose the rig just as our stern wave caught us up and lapped over the aft deck and ran the full length of side decks. Our wake was a truly awesome sight. We were leaving the wake of a forty foot motor boat – a great sight. We were punching a lot of tide and so we headed away from the island to the other side of the Solent to get into the shallows and out of the tide. Flying along at eight knots with only a few feet of water under you is some experience and not one I'd be in a great rush to repeat however we were racing and this was the race we wanted more than anything. The skipper was going for it at all costs and his vessel was well beyond the speeds she was designed for. It's a testament to the late designer and to the crack helm that we didn't just win our class but we won the Round the Island Race

overall and by an extraordinary six minutes. According to the organisers it was small boat racing conditions. I'm not too sure about that but certainly it was testament to what a small boat can achieve against much bigger opposition.

Friday was another round the cans race in the Solent and due to Clarion of White blowing out her headsail on the round the island, we managed to pinch Adrian from her crew. Again the team didn't put a foot wrong and we sailed a tight race winning by around four minutes on corrected time. That was the end of the racing and we headed in pleased that we had made a good account of ourselves. Then it was back to the house for showers and on with the blazers for the prize giving in the Royal Yacht Squadron. The food came and then so did the prizes. The Skipper spent a lot of time collecting various trophies and glassware that evening and we were lucky to be sharing a table with the Clarion of White crew. We felt for them as the blown headsail really ruined their event. That said their spirits remained high and they couldn't have been more supportive of us. With the table full of trophies we really let our hair down and partied late into the night. Even a run in with the local hooligans couldn't dampen our spirits.

LETTERS: Lust in a Stella

Hello Mister Spero,

We just heard about this site and we like to give some details on the Stella 55, sailing under the name of Scarlet.

Back in 1989 we bought the boat from Mr. Paul Romy. Since then we arranged for alterations both in cockpit and in the interior of the cabin.

During the years afterwards we made many trips and passed our holidays on the old Zuiderzee and in the province of Zeeland. In 2007 we installed a revised Albin engine.

We meanwhile got two children and since then we have only sailed on the Alkmaar Lake. Now we feel the boat is getting too small for the family and that is the reason why we intend to sell her.

A. Lust, Krommenie

Hi,

I chanced upon the Stella site, where you mention AE Dicky Bird as the instigator of the design. You may be interested to know that in 1961 Tucker Brown built him *Springtime* designed by Kim Holman, which we are currently renovating. At 47 feet, there are often days when I think a Stella might have been easier!

She is a Yawl, and is now on the slip in Salcombe with 90% of her interior removed for refastening, painting and a bit of modernisation.

Next year we celebrate *SPRINGTIME's* 50th anniversary and another East Coast boat (Buchanan) *Vae Victus* (now called *Shiraz*) does the same. We are both based in Salcombe South Devon. The 2 boats used to compete against one another in Burnham in the early 60's.

We would love to learn more of the history of *Springtime* from any of your members.

Kind regards

Jon Elwell, Salcombe

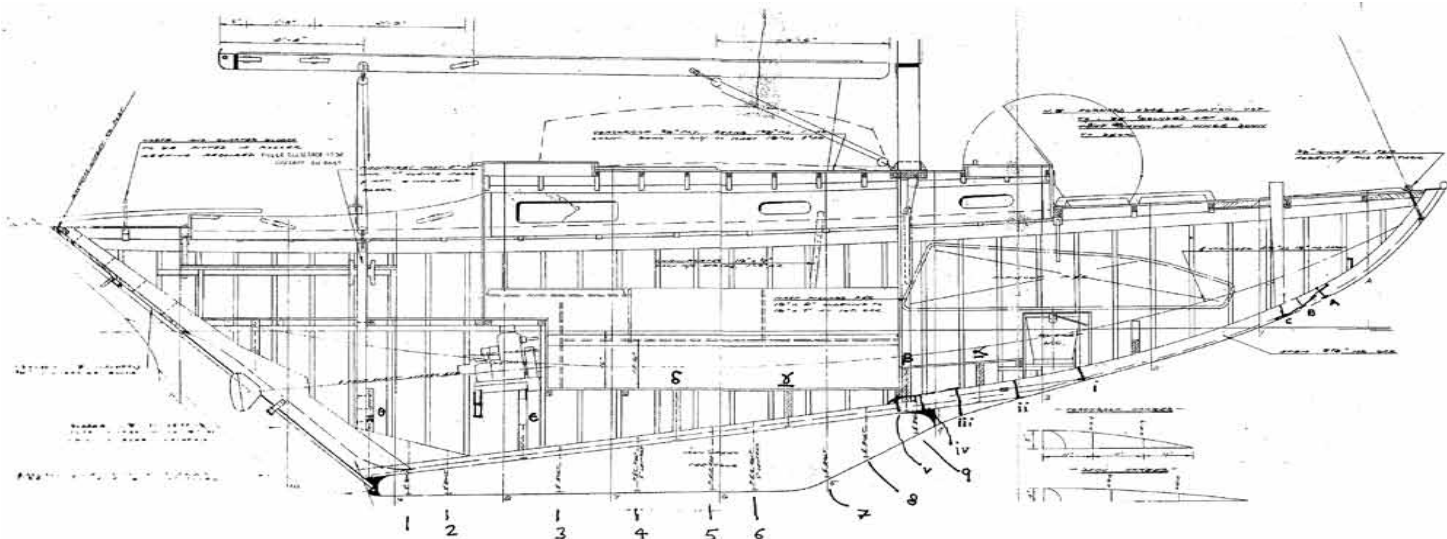


The cockpit rebuild on Scarlet

STELLA MAINTENANCE:

Notes from 20 years by

John Sparks



We're very pleased to be able to print a few extracts from John Sparks' really admirable article on Stella Maintenance. He covers very grown-up subjects such as replacing and repairing frames, re-fastening, scarfing in plank repairs and rebuilding engine beds, as well as reflections on the right order for painting, the smell of linseed oil and how best to stow tallow. The full article is available for downloading by members only on the website, and paper copies may be had of the editor for a crisp fiver.

Some time ago a request for information about maintenance issues made me realise that after maintaining my own Stella Lys of Slaughden for the last 20 years and doing almost all of the work myself, I have accumulated quite a bit of knowledge. This could be usefully passed on. I would stress that what is below is just the way I do it. You may have your own methods with which you are happy. I am not trying to say my ways are the only proper way to maintain your boat.

In common with most Stellas, Lys is made of best-quality rainforest having mahogany planking set on oak timbers. She is largely fastened using copper nails and rivets. Extensive use of mahogany faced plywood was made for the bulkheads and the internal furniture. The ballast keel is of iron and would have originally been attached using wrought-iron bolts. This material is now almost impossible to get hold of and I regret to say that I had to use steel when the bolts were last renewed.

Compared with many Stellas she has led a relatively charmed life in that so far as I know she has never been raced that hard. You will certainly not find her name on that many trophies. She is one of the later ones and I understand that in 1965 there was still a waiting-list for Stellas. I know nothing about the first two years of her history, but she was registered in Maldon in 1967 by a Mr Wrighton. I was told somewhere along the line that he was connected with the high quality kitchens and was responsible for some additional joinery work inside but I was never entirely convinced by this. In 1969 she went down to Kent. While storm bound in Ramsgate one year in another boat I noticed she was on a list of boats "saved" by the Ramsgate lifeboat. In 1972 she was purchased by Keith Canell who kept her at Fambridge and generally looked after her very well until I purchased her in 1990. Since purchase I have refastened her below the

waterline, repairing some ribs, renewed the keel and scarf bolts, re-bedded the keel, renewed the deck covering, toe rails etc, renewed the coach roof deck, fitted a new engine and replaced the rudder cheeks and fittings along with replacing the steel drifts in the rudder blade.

Materials

Philosophy: This is a very pretentious heading but it is important to bear in mind that you are dealing with an old flexible traditionally built boat. Since they were built various new wonder plastic products have been invented some of which if used in the correct place are very useful but sometimes they are used inappropriately and can cause serious long term problems.

Epoxy is a typical example. It is great as a glue for people like me who rarely create perfectly matching wooden joints but if you allow it to get between two planks or bond them together you are likely to create a hard spot and stop the planks closing up when you put the boat in the water.

If in doubt seek advice. Read the product literature and if you are still unsure ring up the technical departments of the manufacturers. They are in my experience very helpful as it is not in their interest to have someone who is dissatisfied with their products.

Another thing which I have been guilty of on a number of occasions is using what I have to hand at the time not what is best for the job. I once bedded a bowsprit down on to a dinghy's plywood deck with Sikaflex as that was what was in the mastic gun at the time. I was not very popular when we had to separate the two with a hack saw blade the next time it needed to come off.

Something I have also come to appreciate in old

buildings and boats is that the builders nearly always did something a particular way because of experience handed down over the years had told them that was what worked. In every generation there were always plenty of "Friday afternoon jobs" and you should not treat something with great reverence just because it is old. Even so before deciding to redo something differently it is worth having a think about what is there and why before discarding it. Many of the traditional methods and materials work just as well today as they did forty years ago but it can be a lot harder finding the materials.

Fastenings

So far as I can make out brass screws were originally used in the construction both in the hull and the internal furniture. I expect the quality of the brass used in screws in 1965 was probably much better than it is today. Some of the screws on Lys had lasted reasonably well but I am sure most Stella owners will have spent considerable time, like me, in trying to extract brass screws which have gone pink. The zinc has wasted away from the alloy through electrolytic action. This causes the brass to become soft and also discolours and damages the surrounding timber. A dab of vinegar on the head of a fastening screw will temporarily halt action on the surface.

When I first started doing work on Lys I replaced some damaged screws with brass which is something I now regret. I now have the slightly extreme view that brass screws should not be allowed onto the boat in any position but at the time I was not aware of a source of bronze other than in little very expensive packets in chandlers.

While it is true that silica bronze wood screws are more expensive than brass in the overall scheme of things they are not that expensive. Classic Marine at Woodbridge 01394 380390 www.classicmarine.co.uk stock them and other such items as copper boat nails together with their extensive range of traditional hardware. They have always been very helpful and their web site is an absolute mine of information about how metals behave in a marine environment, strength issues, gauges and sizes for wood screws and nails etc. I would say essential reading for any Stella owner.

On Epoxy

Do not mix too much glue at once especially during hot weather. The chemical reaction creates heat which makes it go off quicker. In hot weather the result can be that the mixture boils and will melt any plastic tubs you are using. (Margarine tubs are just as good as the expensive measuring pots the chandlers sell, assuming you are using pumps to ensure the correct proportions.)

Epoxy needs protecting from UV light. If filling (expensive and hard to sand) use it sparingly and for all type of work clean up as best you can before it goes off using thinners and a rag. This is a good policy for many materials not just epoxy. For epoxy acetone is much cheaper than epoxy thinners for cleaning up and is also less aggressive. Epoxy can be cut with a chisel when it is "green" but after it has set hard it is very hard to remove.

Can be sanded but when it goes off a waxy substance known as an amine blush appears on the surface which clogs sandpaper and must be removed prior to over coating. It can be overcoated with more epoxy in green state without sanding.

I would strongly advise against the use of any form of epoxy coating on the planking as it will restrict movement in the planks and stop the boat taking up. I am aware that there are some clinker boats that have been painted with epoxy paints but this is not a practice I personally am happy with in a boat where the parts were designed to move in relation to each other. If you are working with epoxy near the planks, use cut up supermarket carrier bags to keep the glue away from the planks or to stop any timbers accidentally bonding together. Packaging tape is also good for masking and can save a lot of time cleaning up.

Traditional Materials

Tallow: (Boiled down sheeps' fat) It can be bought in a plastic sausage even at chandlers such as Fox's. What it is used for on a plastic boats I don't know but I use it in as a lubricant for wood screws. It helps the screws to go in easier and in all but the hottest weather stays more rigid than Vaseline and grease so does not mark the wood to the same degree. All you need to do after having pre-drilled and counter sunk the hole, is push the screw into the sausage of tallow and it will come out with the grease in the thread. After the screw has been screwed in there will be a small deposit of tallow at the top which can be wiped away with a rag. If you are subsequently going to coat the wood it is probably best to go round with a rag and methylated spirits afterwards to remove any remaining grease. Using tallow should also help when the time comes to take the screw out. I normally keep my supply in a Tesco's bag in one of the bins beside the bunks in the saloon. I have not noticed any tendency for it to go rancid or smell and this is after four or five years.

Vaseline Perhaps not a traditional material but if smeared over and worked into any bronze or brass parts, such as seacocks or flagstaff sockets, it stops verdigris forming just in the same way as it stops corrosion to battery terminals. I tend to use a coating of ordinary grease when taking the seacocks to bits at lay up time. I then reassemble with grease in the spring, rub off surplus grease on the outside with a rag and then coat with Vaseline.

Red Lead Powder: This is available in tub format from Classic Marine. (see photo on next page) One tub will last you a lifetime. It is added to putty and gives it a bright orange colour.

Putty is a mixture of linseed oil and chalk and was traditionally used as a bedding compound and for filling caulked seams below the waterline. (Where planks meets stem, keel and sternpost on Stella) The point of the red lead powder is that it makes the putty toxic to marine borers. I have also known birds to eat putty in extremely cold weather. Putty which has gone hard can be rejuvenated by adding a small amount of linseed oil. A messy job.

Up until about 1990 you used to be able to buy red lead primer paint which was the standard primer used in traditional boat-building presumably for the same reasons. In my experience it was quite tenacious at sticking to wood. Out of curiosity I added some red lead powder to a white wood primer and produced a rather fetching salmon pink primer which has stuck to the boat quite well, although this may have more to do with the paint rather than the addition of the powder. Obviously the powder is toxic and appropriate precautions need to be taken when handling. Make sure it does not become airborne and get inhaled.

Genuine Turpentine: This was the traditional thinners used for paint and is extracted from pine trees. It should be bought just for the smell alone. Over the last 40 years its role has been replaced by turpentine substitute and white spirit, which by comparison are fairly foul smelling although are very much cheaper. You can buy turpentine at a good decorators' merchant (Kent Blaxhill) and the most economic way is in a gallon can (Bird Brand). Given its price it does not merit use as a standard thinners but something I have noticed is that a varnish brush kept in a pot of genuine of turpentine for a few days does not clag up in the same way one in white spirit does.

Linseed oil: This is an oil which comes from pressing the seeds from the flax plant and comes in two types, raw and boiled. I have had relatively little to do with raw. In one of his books Claude Worth talks about soaking a newly made dinghy in the raw linseed oil, but the minor drawback was that you then had to leave it for six months before you could apply any finishes. Also in my experience oily surfaces, if left exposed for long periods of time, attract dirt. Boiled linseed oil by comparison forms a skin on the surface after a few days. It is important with boiled that it is applied in a thin coat or that the surface is wiped clean after application as otherwise the skin which forms on the surface will be too thick and soft and will easily peel away. I have outlined the use of this material to strengthen dry wood under the previous heading. I use a 50:50 mix to give areas of exposed galvanised metal on the boat a coat, notably the mast step, anchor and chain which remains on the deck. It helps to stop rusting, although if the anchor gets hard use like mine the protection does not last that long, but that may not bother many of you.

Leaking

I would like to think that all Stella owners are aware how clinker (lapstrake: America) planking keeps the water out or not as the case may be and why they leak when they first go back in the water. They rely on the two overlapping parts of the planking known as the "lands" being connected together by rivets. In Viking days these would have been wooden tree nails or trunnels but by the time Stellas came along these had been replaced by copper nails and roves.

The two planks are riveted when the wood is dry. When the boat is placed in the water the planks swell up and close tight against one another. When the boats come out the planks dry out and open up again. Thin

mahogany planking as found on most Stellas dries quite rapidly. Laying up out of the wind and strong sunlight will help prevent over drying and shrinkage. When working inside the boat ashore, try not to let rubbish drop down into the lands as if this is sufficiently hard it could stop the planks closing up. This is unlikely to happen if the interior has been painted and the boat is just out over winter.

Allowing the boat to dry out seriously does not do the boat any good as once a timber has split or opened up along the grain as a result of shrinkage the two parts may swell back up but they will never bond back together again. Also the shrinkage will place strains on the nails and the timber around the nail holes. Even so don't panic if you have a severely dried out boat. It is probably best to try and get the planks wet before attempting any work. This can be done with a hose from inside and leaving wet sacking inside: but clean it out before you do for reasons explained above as you will be forcing water down through the lands. An alternative and possibly slight extreme solution is to sink the boat, although take the furniture and engine out first! You may also have to wash a considerable amount of silt out of the boat after doing this. An alternative halfway house is leaving it in a cradle where it will only float for a short time at the top of each tide.

The copper nails are also more likely to be fatigued on a boat which has been subject to hard stresses either through years of general hard racing or by cranking up the rigging which bends the boat. Assuming the nails are OK the boat should be able to stand up to being driven quite hard but it's always wise to be kind to the boat where possible. After launching allow the boat to take up for at least a week before driving it hard and ideally you should allow the topsides to get wet with a few gentle sails before taking her out in a blow.

If she leaks a lot when you launch her, one solution can be to fill a bucket of fine sawdust and turn it upside down and push it under the boat with a boathook. Turn it the right way up. This forces the saw dust out which then gets stuck in the lands and swells up. As the sawdust is soft it does not damage the planking. I have had to do this once after burning off the bottom. It was if someone had turned off the tap. You can put a boat in a mud berth to take up but beware mud caulking which washes out under way. When putting a Stella in a mud berth always make sure you lash the tiller well in a central position. If you have not and she slides backwards you can easily break the rudder.

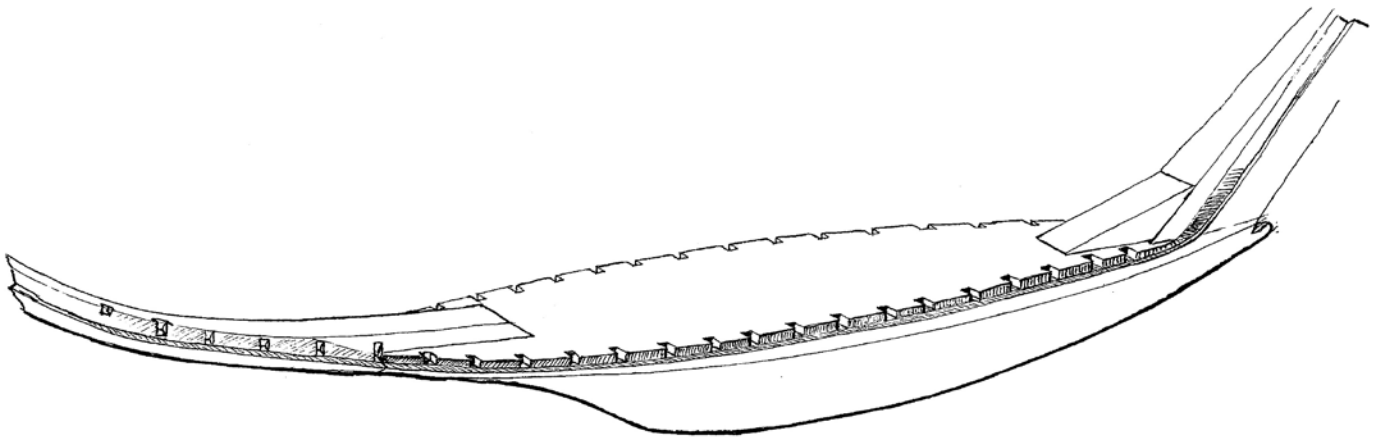
After I had burnt the bottom off it took about four years to get the boat back to where it was leakwise before I started. If you are worried before launching and you can see obvious gaps between the planks you can mix up some oil based mastic with some grease and rub it in to the gaps. (See Mastics and Sealants) Over the years as paint builds up you are less likely to get problems. The planks on the turn of the bilges often look like they are open but do not leak because the planks are hard up against each other on the inside edge.

Although an electric bilge pump may be a necessary for those who do not have the luxury of living near their boat, I have never liked them for two reasons. Firstly if your not there you have no idea how badly the boat is

leaking and secondly from my Jonah perspective electrical terminals in the bilges connected to a battery is a recipe for problems.

The bulk of normal taking up should take place in the first 12 hours. If it has not taken up within a week it is unlikely to do so although small dribbles can take two or three weeks to completely disappear. My boat in optimum condition normally takes between 1 and 2 pumps a week. I have a cockpit cover and I would advise anyone to do the same so as to keep the fresh water out.

If you still have a significant leak, trace it back to where it is coming in by drying the lands with a sponge/tissue. Mark where the problem is and then have the boat out or put it on the posts and have a look outside. A further dab of grease and mastic may work in the short term of if a rove head looks suspect try tightening up some of the nails. Serious repair will have to wait for the winter unless it is desperate. Try to avoid having the boat out of the water in the summer heat if you can.



Cutting the jogs for the timbers: Ted Terry

2010 DATES

Suffolk Yacht Harbour Classic Regatta. June 12 & 13. Contact Alan Jones.

Orwell Picnic, June 19. An informal beach barbeque on the Clamp, just downriver from Pin Mill. Bring your own food and drink for the barbeque - and a dinghy to get ashore. Contact John Sparks.

Heybridge Rally. 24 July. The traditional Heybridge lock-in, Beer, curry and company. High water 1225 BST (lock closes shortly after this). Contact Trevor Spero.

Mersea Week & Town Regatta. August 8 - 14. Contact Alan Jones.

Burnham Week, August 28 - September 4. Contact Alan Jones or Ed Maggs. Including the Stella barbeque c/o Ed & Fran on Saturday evening (Aug 28).

Please note the 2010 Stella Championships will comprise nine races, three from each event, being the whole of the Suffolk Yacht Harbour regatta, the first three days of Burnham Week, and three days (to be confirmed) from Mersea Week. Two discards over the series.