



Civil Service Sailing Association - Channel Sailing Division

SKIPPERS NOTES – Yacht Sea Essay of Hamble

Newsletter No 02/15

Introduction

This is an occasional document issued by the Yacht Secretary, which will be placed on the CSD website and/or sent to all CSSA approved Skippers in CSD when there is new and/or important operational information to promulgate. There is no intention to produce newsletters on a regular basis. Each one is numbered in sequence every year so recipients can identify if any are missing.

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Dangers of grounding

The MAIB report into the loss of Cheeki Rafiki and her crew in mid Atlantic in 2014 highlights the dangers of repeated groundings. As, sadly, there were no survivors of the yacht's sinking and the boat was not recovered the report's conclusions are inevitably speculative. They conclude that Cheeki Rafiki, a Beneteau 40.7 built in 2006, inverted very quickly following detachment of the keel possibly due to hull failure around the keel fixings. The boat had had a history of five groundings four of which were slight and one which required repairs to the hull. There was some evidence that the bonding between the inner hull (the matrix) and the outer hull had failed when the repairs were made. The Report speculates that the groundings weakened the hull around the keel fixings, possibly contributing to separation of the inner and outer hulls (matrix separation) to the extent that the keel could not withstand strong lateral loads experienced in heavy weather.

The important thing here is that Cheeki Rafiki's mode of hull construction, namely GRP moulded outer hull bonded to a GRP inner hull is very similar that of our present Jeanneau SO409 and our previous boat the Dufour 405. With the D405 we did find some signs of detachment of the inner hull from the outer hull during the winter lay up after two season's sailing. This was repaired. At the time of sale to Sea Ventures in December 2014 a boat surveyor spotted some extremely fine hairline cracks around the keel fixings which again were repaired. These too could be the first signs of possible matrix separation in the keel area.



In light of these observations the Yacht Husband will adopt the following preventative maintenance strategy: During the winter lay up the YH will check for any signs of cracking around the hull/keel joint and for any signs of detachment of the inner hull from the outer hull. Any defects found will be repaired after consultation with an expert/ marine surveyor. After 3 seasons sailing a marine surveyor will be called in to make more thorough checks of the inner/outer hull bonding. Any of his recommendations for remedial work will subsequently be undertaken.

In the interim Skippers are requested to note even slight groundings in the log and on the Handover Clearance Note. The Yacht Husband will then maintain a record. In the case of serious groundings where the boat cannot be refloated without assistance, or 'hard' groundings which cause crew to stumble or fall, skippers are asked to notify the yacht husband as soon as possible. The YH will then decide whether the boat should be lifted for expert inspection of any damage.

Fore hatch blanking plate

Under the MCA code for commercial pleasure vessels fore hatches are required to be hinged at their forward ends. Thus if the hatch catches fail, or if it has been left open, seas breaking over the bow will tend to force the hatch closed – a fail-safe design. The new Sea Essay however has a fore hatch, which is hinged at its aft end and consequently opens like crocodile jaws. If this is left open during heavy weather there is a possibility that the fore hatch could be ripped off its hinges allowing water to cascade into the forecabin and swamp the boat. The MCA code therefore requires vessels with aft hinged fore hatches to carry a fore hatch blanking plate. Sea Essay now has one. It is a 510mm x 680mm x 5mm shaped aluminium plate which fits the fore hatch opening by means of two wooden battens and four screwed rods with eight wing nuts. The photographs below show how it is fitted. It can be fitted from inside the forecabin and is to be used when the fore hatch itself has been ripped off or is somehow missing or is unserviceable. The blanking plate is stored in an orange bag in the underfloor compartment of the main cabin, which also houses the storm jib. Instructions for installing the blanking plate are in the bag.



New Lee Cloth mounting arrangement

Skippers should note that the arrangements for setting up the lee cloth have been modified as the fixing rings on the locker lids were damaging the seat cushions. The new locations of the fixing rings are shown in the photographs below.

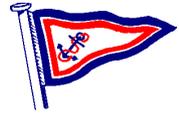


Berth 9

We have made an infill panel and cushion to fit in the foot well beneath the chart table. This makes an additional berth on the port side of the main cabin. It is slightly shorter than the double berth on the starboard (table) side of the main cabin but will still accommodate a medium height (170cm; 5'9") adult. It provides an alternative for two persons to the double berth in the main cabin. Sea Essay is only coded for 8 persons, so it should not be sailed with 9 persons on board. The baseboard, which simply slides into position between the chart table seat and small forward berth, is stowed underneath the berth cushions in the forward cabin, and the cushion on the chart shelf in the forward cabin.

Reef 3

Skippers are reminded that should it be necessary to put in reef 3 then the 'tack' shackles on both sides of the mainsail should be clipped to the rings on both sides of the sail. Clipping down on one side only puts too much strain on the rig securing the shackles and the blue plastic retaining collar. Already the collar on the starboard side has become badly gouged (see below).



Adrian Barnes
Yacht Secretary