

# Boat-owner's diary

The PBO 'family' share their boat-owning treats, trials and tribulations

## Lifting the spirit



Ben Meakins eagerly anticipates the long-awaited lift-in day

**I**n fits and starts, we're slowly getting closer to the magical lift-in day. The antifouling's on, the boot top line is masked and painted, and all that remains is to paint underneath the trailer pads, fit a new engine anode and jib halyard sheave, put a final coat of paint on the washboards – and we're ready to hit the road.

Not a moment too soon. Last year, we spent three weeks out of the water, and the spring refit passed in a blur of manic activity. This year, we came out on 10 December – and have spread the refit out over the intervening three months. It's been a novelty, being able to spend a good amount of time on each job on the list, and carefully finding the best deals on antifouling and other pricey bits. Normally, we just rush to the nearest chandlery and buy



**Polly's toolbox: after a winter of neglect it's like Jenga with tetanus**

whatever can be painted on straight away. While good for the bank balance, we thought it would also be good for the stress levels – but have found that we've been missing being able to just go sailing. The sense of freedom you get simply puttering out of the



**With the final coat of super-smooth antifouling, we can hit the road!**

mouth of the river, whether for a short evening race, big regatta or a weekend cruise, is something that Steph and I have missed more than we thought we would. It's the knowledge that if it all gets too much, you can be on the boat on her mid-river mooring within the hour, slip the lines and be far removed from shore-based life and its accompanying stresses in only a few more short minutes.

But before we can go in, there's the small matter of the toolbox, which, after a winter's refit, is occupying most of a bunk in a nest

of rusty hacksaw blades and sailmaker's needles, spare wires, mis-matched screwdrivers and greasy spanners. Trying to find anything in it is akin to playing a risky sort of Jenga – with a dose of tetanus if we make a wrong move.

Injuries apart, by the time this issue comes out we'll hopefully be in the water, the new standing rigging will have arrived and we can go sailing again. I can't wait!

■ PBO's features editor, Ben Meakins, and his girlfriend Steph co-own Polly, an Impala 28, with friends. They keep her on the Hamble on a river mooring

## Tinker-sailor soldiers on



Tom Stevens has been making progress of sorts over the last four weeks: but sadly, not on his boat

**I**t has been a frustrating last four weeks. Every day in which I have had a spare couple of hours to fettle *Oystercatcher* for the coming season has been washed out, blown off or frozen up. I appear to be describing myself as a 'fair weather fitter-outer', but I do need a decent spell of good conditions to finish off the job.

The boot top needs painting and the hull needs to be

antifouled and then I am pretty much there, once my beautifully varnished tiller is refitted.

There is still a list of little jobs to be done but I am a great advocate of the 'get her in the water' school of thought. I spend many an evening early in the season out on the mooring, *Oystercatcher* to be afloat

again, while I finish all those little tasks. Actually, looking back on past seasons, I don't think that I have ever worked my way through the complete list – but that, I think, is one of the great joys of owning a boat. There is always a valid excuse to go afloat: not necessarily to go sailing, but just to tinker.

Last weekend describes my current lack of progress rather well. The weather

was perfect, just right for antifouling and painting – and that was the problem. We live in a very old house that also needs constant upkeep, and I had a couple of barge boards and windows that needed urgent attention. Having dealt with those, I had to trim a beech hedge which I had ignored

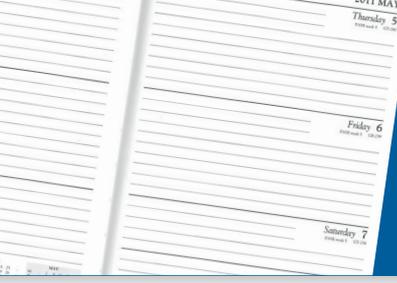
for a year, as it was now at the stage where we couldn't drive past it without taking the paint off our cars. Caroline then pointed out that the grass was starting to grow and look very untidy, so I hopped onto my mower and roared round at top speed, like a demented barber. That was Saturday gone.

Sunday dawned, bright and perfect, and my first job was to chair my final committee meeting as Commodore of Aldeburgh Yacht Club. Following that it was a big family lunch and then, at last, I was free to go down to the boatyard. Unfortunately there were a couple of friends fitting out their boats so I had to chat to them and, going into the yard for bits and pieces, I had to admire and discuss the boats in there, and the work being done on them. So, as I have done no work on the boat for a month, I can only offer you a photo of my arch-rival, Henry, just about to antifoul and finish his fitting out. Launch date is approaching fast and, at this rate, I will be pushed to make it.



**Tom's arch-rival Henry prepares to antifoul and finish fitting out**

■ PBO ad executive Tom Stevens and his wife Caroline keep their Trapper 500, *Oystercatcher*, on a swinging mooring on the River Alde by summer and lay up over winter at nearby Aldeburgh



Ben Meakins squares up against a threatening toolbox, Tom Stevens has a house in the way of his boat, David Pugh advocates clan solidarity for blissful boat work, and Stu Davies comments upon the red diesel hue and cry

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## Family fortunes



Between the Pughs and the PBO family, shared boat ownership is paying dividends, says David Pugh

**O**ne of the great benefits of shared boat ownership is that, sometimes, things happen without you. This month, I'm grateful to my father and brother who have been responsible for the progress on *Red Dragon* since my last instalment – the gas line is now installed between our new (bucket) gas locker and the cooker, and I've had nothing to do with it.

The next task is to start antifouling, so this weekend I'll be getting started with the wet and dry and the gloss rollers. Fortunately, we stripped and re-antifouled the hull only two years ago, so painting is currently a moderately pleasurable experience, made more so by it being something of a family occasion. This year, I'm expecting my sister, brother and possibly my brother's fiancée to form the team, which at least gets an unpleasant

task over with quickly and in good company. And the quicker the job is done, the quicker we can go sailing. After several years of missing beautiful early season weather, we're trying to get in before Easter this year.

Meanwhile, the PBO Project Boat has finally reached the end of the destructive phase, with all the fittings removed, much of the paint scraped off and the hull-deck joint stripped out to leave a glassfibre shell. I'm delighted – destroying

**Being a boat owner is a pleasure rather than a chore at the moment**

things is satisfying to a point, but after a while you begin to wonder firstly

whether you'll remember how it all goes back together again, and secondly if it's possible to finish the project at all.

The second is just one of many occasional flashes of pessimism that occur when you're up to your eyeballs in glassfibre dust and sheared bolts, but the former may not matter at all. By stripping down



David hard at work on the 'other' boat, PBO's very own *Hantu Biru*

*Hantu Biru* so completely, we have a rare opportunity – a blank canvas to fit out as we like. There are a few fixed points: the rig is fine and, as far as we can tell, so are the sails, which means that the sheet leads should stay in the same position.

Also, as we're working to a tight budget, we're unlikely to be investing in much new deck gear. But it's nice to know that virtually anything else can be changed if we want to, without worrying about filling holes, leaks, repainting or any of the other things that usually

put me off from boat work.

So, with one boat on the brink of launching and the other teetering on the edge of a constructive phase, being a boat owner is a pleasure rather than a chore at the moment. I just hope that the weather gods break their alliance with Murphy this year and give us fair winds and calm seas.

■ PBO's deputy editor David Pugh and his two siblings jointly own *Red Dragon*, a Contessa 26 that they keep moored in Poole Harbour

## The cue for some colourful language



Stu Davies gets the 'blue stuff' blues, and sees red over those controversial diesel regulations

**T**he seasons fly by. As I look out of the window I can see the first of the daffodils flowering – an important marker here in Wales. We have had a mild winter with hardly any snow: I didn't even have to change the gas supply on the boat to propane to prevent gas freeze-up.

I usually leave *Sacha* in the water over the winter and then lift her out for a quick scrub and antifoul towards the end of March. As I write, the hoist has been booked and the scrub arranged: both myself and Mrs D will go through that ritual beloved of us all known

as 'getting covered in blue stuff.' Oh, OK then: antifouling.

I will also be taking advantage of the more leisurely lift this year to do the last remaining big job – reattaching the main anode to the hull. One of *Sacha's* previous owners had bodged this by drilling through the inner hull lining and squashing it against the hull with the fixing bolts: not pretty, and well worthy of the term 'bodge'.

It will be an interesting lift this year. Milford Marina has a slipway quite some distance from the boatyard, and the hoist has to traverse the road for a few hundred yards. We are staying on board for



Spring has sprung, but Stu Davies is seeing red (diesel) rather than daffodil yellow

the week while we do the antifouling and anode job, and I am busy locating some large-bore pipes to allow the use of various on board facilities. 'Bucket and chuck

it' takes on a whole new meaning sometimes...

When we relaunch, we will be ready for the new season. We may cruise to the Scillies this year, or perhaps even further – red diesel regulations allowing. This issue has the potential to cause sailors a lot of grief: quite why the government couldn't have stood strong on our behalf, I don't know. The way things are going, if any of us want to go abroad I suspect we will be cleaning out our tanks and filling with white diesel.

The only problem for us is humping it from the filling station, but I suppose we shall overcome this: we always do!

■ Stu Davies has written many practical articles for PBO. He and his wife Laura keep their Bénéteau Océanis 381, *Sacha*, moored in Milford Haven