



Ben Meakins plays fast and loose with use-by dates, Stu Davies refuses to let the price of spare parts exhaust his possibilities, David Pugh cadges a lift-out and Tom Stevens' washing machine gets roped into cleaning the rigging

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## We have lift-out



David Pugh considers this year's paradoxical weather as *Red Dragon* is conveyed to her winter quarters

**I'm writing this while fitfully gazing out of the window at an inky sky boldly illuminated by bright sunshine. Every so often a chorus of dervishes howl in triumph as they weasel round our leaky 1970s office windows.**

This visual and auditory paradox sums up the weather we've experienced this year, with winds apparently controlled by an on-off switch and spells of beautiful sunshine chased away by relentless rain.

It hasn't just been the weather: the tide has been a bit weird this year too. When I went down to our sailing club recently to tidy some loose ends I found flood defences in place to hold back some of the highest tides I've seen in Poole,

**I was struck by the team's quiet professionalism**

especially so early in the winter.

Perhaps the consequent high flow rates are responsible for the sandbank that has made its way into the middle of the channel leading towards Wareham, where we were only saved from a day spent aground by another hapless boat owner who had grounded on it as he headed upriver ahead of us as we took *Red Dragon* to the yard ready for winter.

Thanks to his plight we made the trip without incident, but I fear he was there until the evening tide lifted him off again. We loitered for a while as a motorboat laboured vainly to get him afloat, but there was little we could do to help.

The following week, the team at Ridge Wharf hoisted *Red Dragon*



The Ridge Wharf team administer to *Red Dragon* in bright sunshine. True to this year's form, it started pouring with rain 10 minutes later

out of the water, blasted her off and plonked her neatly on her trailer, ready for her journey to winter quarters in Somerset. I went along to watch and was struck by their quiet professionalism, drifting her out of her berth and into the lifting dock with a few well-aimed nudges and tweaks on the lines, dropping the mast on the deck and lifting her out without fuss and placing her gently on the trailer in exactly the right spot, first time.

It was a rare treat to watch, as Ridge normally expect you to leave

your boat with them to haul out as and when the tide serves. However, I was there because I've been testing unmarked tins of a new International Paint antifouling over the season, and wanted to see how it had performed. Suffice to say I'm impressed: it's being launched at London Boat Show and makes the annual painting chore bearable. I'll report on it in full next month!

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

## So you think you know your stuff?



Where did all of this come from? Tom Stevens is staggered by the amount of items he has to remove from *Oystercatcher* every year

**Ended last month's diary saying that I might extend our insurance and leave Oystercatcher in for another month or two. Of course, as soon as I mentioned this the weather turned nasty, so I had her lifted out – and now she's tucked up for the winter at Aldeburgh Boatyard, we have had some really lovely weather.**

Most years I move onto my arch-rival Henry's boat for the winter series and so far we have had one excitingly windy, wet race followed by two sublime outings where the sun shone and the breeze was gentle, perfect for his lightweight cruiser. With most of the moorings lifted for the winter we have the whole river to race in without having to weave in and out

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of moored boats. I put up with constant comments about how nice it must be to sail on a fast boat for a change. Secretly, I find it huge fun – and there's also the novelty that it's not my responsibility to provide the beers. Henry gives me six minutes every hour on handicap, which shows how much faster his Bénéteau is compared to the Trapper. Mind you, I wouldn't mention this anywhere near *Oystercatcher* as her feelings would be terribly hurt.

I have pretty much taken everything prone to winter damage off the boat and carted it home. Every year it staggers me how much stuff is on board: somehow, every time we go cruising Caroline manages to sneak a bit more on. When I load the boat up at the

beginning of the season it takes two carloads, but the unloading takes three. The woman is obviously very devious as I never notice the contents growing as the season progresses.

The main activity, once I have everything home, is washing and rinsing. I spent most of last Saturday washing all the cutlery, crockery and saucepans, and was rewarded with the great feeling of having everything stowed away for the winter – and a severe case of dishpan hands. I have also had the annual battle of the washing machine: I have to convince Caroline that, firstly, the ropes will do no harm as they tumble around and, secondly, that

the horrible noise the bearings now make is quite normal.

My running rigging looks stunning and smells beautifully fragrant – but I'm wondering if it's bad form to suggest to one's wife that she might like a new washing machine for Christmas?

■ 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



When two carloads of stuff starts to become three