

Boat-owner's diary

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

Ben Meakins turns up the heat in the Winter Series, Tom Stevens decides between fair means or fouling, and David Pugh discovers that the PBO Project Boat is a most demanding mistress

Missed last month's diaries? Visit www.pbo.co.uk to catch up

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Bargains of the month...

For the latest in chandlery gear turn to page 97

Winter Series? I'm warming to it



A bemused Ben Meakins ponders the paucity of appropriate winter weather while topping up his tan



Ben can reflect upon a great year with Polly, and some exciting racing

The so-called Winter Series continues – but someone seems to have forgotten to tell the weather gods that it's time to flick the switch to the setting for cold mornings, icy northerly winds and arctic drizzle. Instead, we've had some stunning weather, with one Sunday so sunny that we shed our jackets, and returned home with sun-kissed faces. We could have been in the Caribbean – if it weren't for Fawley Power Station nearby to bring us back down to earth.

If you read last month's diary, you'll know that we broke our elderly boom with some over-enthusiastic heaving on the kicker in strong winds. Some research later, and Z Spars came up trumps at half the price of the competition. A quick phone call had the section ordered, assembled and on its way from Ipswich next day. We installed it on the gooseneck in time to race the following Sunday. Great service!

By the time this issue comes out, the Winter Series will be over, and

our laying-up plan will hopefully have swung into action, with military precision. We'll service Polly's trailer bearings, pump up the tyres and tow it to Hamble Point, where the yard will hoick the boat out of the water and place her on the trailer, ready to hit the road.

Co-owner Jo's brother will then turn up with his Land Rover and tow Polly to her winter residence on a nearby driveway, whereupon

we can start the ever-growing list of jobs at our leisure. Taking the boat out of the water is

always a sad day, but we can at least reflect on a great year, with some exciting, close racing, a new top speed – 11.5 knots under kite in the Round the Island – and a truly memorable cruise to North Brittany and the Channel Islands, where we got as far as Tréguier and its amazing patisseries. There was also the odd weekend and bank holiday, spent swinging to a hook and enjoying the relaxation that only being on the water in your own boat can bring.

Bring on 2012 for more of the same!

■ 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



Barnacles cover the prop, and the saildrive may have to come out again

In a foul temper



Tom Stevens has an antifouling dilemma after the minimalist approach fails to pay dividends

I hate this time of year! Oystercatcher came out of the water on the last day of October and was moved to her winter storage berth in Aldeburgh Boatyard. She now sits, propped up, away from her natural element and with her homely features stripped out. For us, the sailing season is officially over.

It hasn't been a bad year. Plenty of racing, cruising and evening supper/sails with friends, and the weather gods mostly smiled on us. A wonderful start to the season, a windy middle which made for great racing, and a sublime finish leaving us on a high. Even the laying up has been carried out in warm, sunny conditions.

I am at a loss as to which antifouling I should use on my saildrive and folding propeller. This year, I thought I would try the minimalist approach. I polished the blades and boss to within an inch of their lives, assuming that nothing would stick to it as it was so super-smooth. How wrong I was!

The hull, with conventional antifouling, came out with the

expected slight build-up of mud and slime, but the prop was covered in barnacles, as was the immediate area around it. You have to admire the little so-and-sos; they are very tenacious. Once again I have removed the prop, polished it up, and am looking for advice as to what might keep it barnacle-free.

On the subject of removing things, the saildrive might have to come out again as the top driveshaft seal has a leak and is dripping hydraulic oil into the sump under the engine. Not much, but probably enough to warrant taking

the engine out, re-opening the sealed hatch in the cockpit sole and extracting the saildrive for surgery.

Aldeburgh Yacht Club's winter racing series carries on until mid-December, so I try to hitch rides on other members' yachts. Yesterday I was on board IF, a beautiful 8 Metre class boat owned and rebuilt by Aldeburgh Boatyard's owner, Peter Wilson. Sadly there was no wind and the race never happened, but – fingers crossed – I might be invited on board again before the season is 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

A most unlikely temptress



'What time do you call this?' demands Red Dragon as David Pugh returns home, reeking of mouldy mattresses from a torrid assignation with another boat

There once was an old man of Lyme, who married three wives at a time. When they asked, 'Why the third?' he replied, 'One's absurd! And bigamy, sir, is a crime.' It is indeed, and I can see why. This past month has not been short of practical boat ownership, but none of it has benefited my first love, Red Dragon. Instead, my colleague Ben and I have been slaving away on our new project – Snapdragon 23 Hantu Biru. You can read her story so far on page 24.

To be fair, Red Dragon's needs are largely aesthetic, as more than eight years of cruising and occasional racing by owners to whom the idea of her going a quarter of a knot slower than her true potential is anathema has resulted in her rig and sails being pretty much up together. Down below she's perhaps less smart, and plans are afoot to improve things over the



David finds a boat, Hantu Biru, beneath a carapace of grime

course of the winter, but she's comfortable and (like all Contessa 26 owners fondly say) cosy. Meanwhile, Hantu Biru is, without mincing words, in a state. After 20-odd years of neglect, a boat which shows the signs of having once been well-loved lacks any semblance of creature comfort. The mattresses are mouldy, the

GRP interior is cracked in places, the bilge, despite cleaning, has a film of rust transferred from the engine, most of the fittings and windows leak... The only soft bits are made of plywood – not a good state of affairs. More heart-wrenching still, all we seem to do is make it worse. The toolkit for Hantu Biru-ing, as Ben and I have started to call it, consists of a selection of hacksaws, a grinder, cold chisels and big hammers. The most subtle item is Aldi's version of a Dremel – with a cutting disc.

Hantu Biru's need of attention is, therefore, greater, but I can't help worrying that Red Dragon will get jealous. So my task over the next couple of weeks is to visit her in her shed, appease her and at least make a start on the winter job list.

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, which is why bigamy is a crime. It's also why the old man of Lyme is utterly misguided – imagine having three to look after!

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



Needy and neglected: a heads-up on Hantu Biru's sobering condition



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