UK BALLAD ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Autumn 2025



Chair's introduction

By Catherine Noakes

Well, a little time has passed since my last report and, to me at least, it seems to have been a different year.

We held our Annual Ballad Championship in Fowey but, as with last year, over a different weekend in June rather than the late May Bank Holiday weekend which had been the routine for many years. The number of boats attending was fairly low, but we were very pleased to have Outlaw of Lundy join us after several years of being absent. This was under her new owner Kas Danes and with a new colour (i.e., Ballad dark blue when she used to be light blue!) and really looking the part. Congratulations to them on joining the Ballad family and well done in taking part in the championship.

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Ballads and their owners feel at home in Fowey and we were all made welcome and enjoyed both the racing and the socialising despite the low numbers. Two of our recent stalwarts were missing. Shebeen with Ken Morgan, who decided that the weather forecast for bringing the boat down from Poole along with a shortage of crew would make the voyage too onerous, so he brought his camper van! And Blavinge which had reluctantly been sold by owner Peter Askew. Peter was going to attend but was stymied by the change in dates. He hopes the boat may join again with the new owners and he may try to come along to see us all.

Since the championship we have had a varied weather pattern with some lovely sunshine and little rain, strong winds and calm days, all very unpredictable. I hope that many of you have managed to enjoy your sailing and continue to do so until the end of the season.

Some of our other long standing Ballad owners are feeling that the time has come to part with their much-loved boats and one in particular is Summertime with Chris and Selina Tyrell. They had a lot of interest from potential buyers, and we are happy to say she has been successfully sold and will be based in the South-west. We hope to see her along at future events under her new ownership. We also send best wishes along to Chris and Selina and would love to see them at future social events if they are able to attend.

Then we come to the autumn/end of season time and our planned AGM. This will be at Saltash Sailing Club where we are made very welcome and we can enjoy good food and ambience as well as "doing the business". There are two items that I feel we should be considering for serious discussion, and I would ask that, even if you cannot attend, you do think about these points and let either myself or your secretary, Janie, know your thoughts prior to the AGM.



The first point concerns the Championship. Your committee needs to know where you would like it to be (and fitting into club fixtures etc. is getting more difficult), when you want it to take place (we moved from the Bank Holiday weekend due to the availability and cost of accommodation ashore) and the format of the sailing (do we still want to race? Or would we like more of a rally?). Please do have some thought about this and come prepared to speak up about how you see the Championship developing.

The second point relates to this somewhat, in that a number of the Ballad owners have had their yachts for many years and are not getting any younger. Some are finding it difficult to keep their crew going as many younger sailors seem to prefer more modern, lighter weight, relatively easier boats to sail. However, there are new, younger owners who we need to encourage to join the association and there are younger sailors who we can invite as crew. Please consider how we, as the association, should work together to "enliven and reenthuse" the association especially as many of us have enjoyed the special friendship brought about by sailing such lovely yachts.

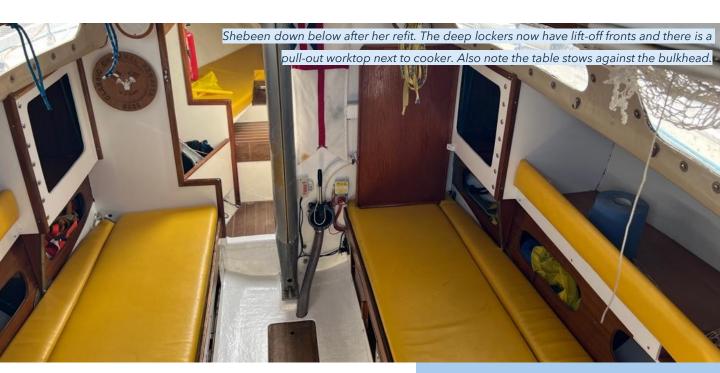
So, I will sign off now hoping to see as many as possible at the AGM, not only to discuss the points I have mentioned, but also, and mainly, to enjoy the camaraderie.

Happy sailing until the end of the season!



Lovely old girl!

By Ken Morgan



Shebeen bashes on with the usual winter scrub/antifoul and constant repairs, but like her crew she has more creaks and strains as the years go on.

Last year we did a very windy, lumpy race back from Weymouth - deep troughs hiding other boats then up riding the crests - all good fun. But when offloading our kit back in Poole the sleeping bags were soaked, both sides, but especially to starboard. I already knew we had leaks, and the ply pilot berth bases had been delaminating for a while, almost to the point of transparency. Then I saw that the bottom end of the starboard ss chain plate strap had curved inboard and up! Not good - apart from the through deck stud and the line of bolts securing the aft chain plate to some pretty flimsy ply, most of the shroud load runs via this ss strap to two bolts into a GRP fin rising from the hull. Both bolts were loose, but worse, the upper one goes into the very top edge of the GRP where it is classed onto ply - in Shebeen's case, very wet and soggy ply.

So, already with a long list of mast related repairs to resolve, we lifted the rig out. A DIY job with our club's fixed derrick which can just accommodate a Ballad's keel stepped mast. Removing the shroud through deck fixings revealed oval holes, clearly caused by wear.

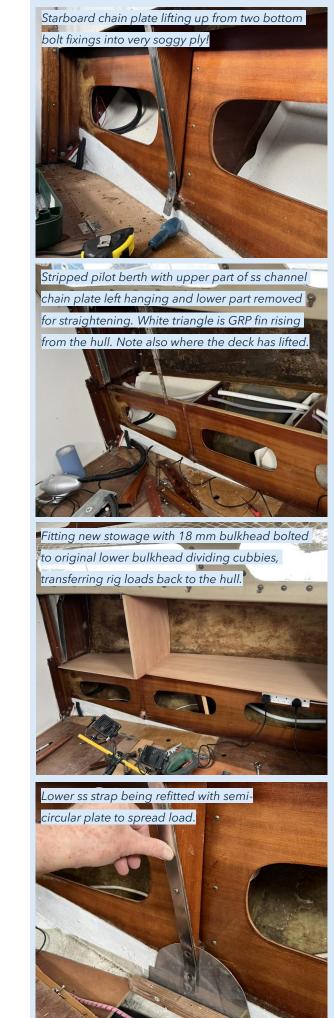
I temporarily sealed the six holes and set to down below. Both pilot berths were completely stripped out just leaving the cubby hole settee backs where the ply is bonded to the hull. Stripping all this showed just how flimsy the aft chain plate restraint was.

This gave me the opportunity to make a few changes.

Firstly, whilst the pilot berths were great for the kids when they were little, and even for crew back in the day, none of them would fit in there now. Even if they somehow wriggled in, I would never get them out again, at least not without anaesthetic. So now I could shorten the bunks into shelf stowage and open up the forward end to gain direct access rather than delving into a dank festering black hole.

Secondly, a year or so ago, Dick broke open the rum locker for myself and crew on board Balu. She was strangely more comfortable than Shebeen down below, the reason, Balu is an Mk2 Ballad with quarter berth, forward facing chart table and no pilot berths, so the settee seat backs are set further back, very relaxed and appealing to weary old sailors. So, by fitting narrower shelves, I gained 4 or 5 inches on each side and, even better, fitted padded back rests. This meant the galley work top extension which we occasionally hooked on had to be jettisoned. Instead, I fitted a pull-out fiddled tray with mug holders right by the cooker to pour hot drinks.

Back to more important things. Alarmingly the starboard deck had risen by half or three quarters of an inch where the chain plate was giving way. I could not figure out how to lower that again, so the new joinery was just made to suit. The shroud holes were cleaned out and resin filled around undersize bolts, silicone coated and wrapped in PTFE tape to ensure release.



After the resin cured, easy to remove, leaving accurate pilot holes for drilling to accurately refit the base studs. Lots of conflicting advice for how best to ensure a waterproof seal and I opted for butyl tape. I think this is what Albin used to seal the Ballad decks onto the hulls. Certainly after 53 years the mastic squeezed out of that joint is still flexible so there should be no worries about movement.

I reinforced the chain plate fixings in two ways. Firstly, where the pilot berth was shortened, I fitted an 18 mm part bulkhead, scribed to the deck and hull, extended down to bolt against the existing glassed-in ply dividing the low-level cubbies. The ss channel forming the upper part of the chain plate now transfers part of its load onto the new bulkhead. Then at the bottom of the ss strap, I added in a semi-circular ss plate to give five bolt fixings to the GRP fin, rather than the original two.

While all this was going on below, whenever the winter rains stopped, I painted a bit more of the deck. The once smart 2-pack paint was peeling off in large flakes and looking very threadbare. In its place I just went for a cheap and cheerful Hempel Multicoat - simple clean off, light sand and brush on. It is not precious so any future scrapes, spills, bashes will just be another quick brush over. As a before and after comparison, she looked gorgeous.

Then back in with the mast. Fitting the deck wedges has always been fiddley. I have tried everything in the past, i.e., rubber blocks, softwood wedges, but never successful, until this time. I cut up old fenders to make curved slices, each about eighth/quarter inch thick, slotted them in fore and aft, secured with a long jubilee.





Somehow the mast has ended up a little more vertical than before, very obviously so when viewed against all her taller more modern neighbours along the pontoon. We took a lot of trouble to get the rig tensions correct and this has paid off. Her performance has markedly improved both on the wind and with the kite up.

With all this work, Shebeen was late off the marks this year, so late that her first trip would have been the delivery down to Fowey for the Nationals, but with only Myriam as crew, just a fortnight shy of her 80th (!) and a 36-hour beat into a too brisk westerly, and all this without any sea trials, prudence (a new crew member) made us chicken out.

So Shebeen's first outing was the following weekend racing down to Weymouth, still in a fresh westerly and with exceptionally big seas in St. Aldhems Race. We filled the cockpit! No matter, everything worked, and the sleeping bags stayed dry.

Another week later, on Midsummer's Eve, we did a night race to Cherbourg. At 04:55 the sun rose on our port quarter, huge and red into a cloudless sky reflecting off the spinnaker with dolphins alongside. Just perfect. Our classmates appeared from port and starboard on the last couple of miles to the finish, so dicing to the end. We got them both on corrected time then, better than that, found Shebeen had got first overall in a fleet of 20 boats. This is why we do it!

As each year goes by, Shebeen's neighbours get longer, wider, taller and shinier all with master bedrooms, ensuite showers, hot and cold water, heating and fully fitted galleys, not to mention push button navigation (requiring no navigation skills) and no chart tables. Do we care? Shebeen just sits there smiling because, like all you Ballad sailors, we know perfection!



From desk to deck: a race to the Eddystone lighthouse

By May Rodriguez



In February this year, a valued colleague dropped an email in my inbox with the subject line "Woman sailing power?" It was an invitation to join a women-only crew aboard Duchess for the Eddystone Pursuit on 14th June. My reply was instant: Count me in! The idea of sailing in Plymouth with colleagues, and in a women-only team, sounded like pure adventure. Working at a marine research institute means I spend my days immersed in ocean science, but in reality, I interact far more with my computer than with the sea. This was my chance to change that.

At that point, my sailing experience was close to zero. I had attended a couple of University staff dinghy evenings in 2024 and had been scheduled for a sailing research cruise aboard the Statsraad Lehmkuhl this spring, where I would not only conduct exciting science, but also learn the ropes, literally. Unfortunately, illness in March cancelled those plans. The Pursuit became my main maritime goal. To prepare, I squeezed in a dinghy course just two weeks before the event. Let's just say... I was not a natural.

Before the big day, Liz and Gemma organised a training evening aboard Duchess with Janie at the helm. Helen drove us to the marina, where we were greeted by Janie and Rob. We practised basic skills, tying knots, moving safely around the deck, and learning our positions. I was assigned to foredeck alongside Gemma, responsible for ensuring the sail sheets ran freely during tacks. It was an exciting spot, nothing like having the sail swing across just centimetres in front of you.

That evening we joined a short practice race up to the waterfront and back. With almost no wind, the pace was slow and serene. My only real job was to watch for tacks, free the sheet, and shout "Ready!" when Janie called the manoeuvre. At one point, the wind died completely, and we radioed by the race officer who ended the race early. Tea and biscuits on deck, followed by a club debrief by Jonathan (and curry and fries on the way), made for a confidence-building introduction.

Race day was clear and bright. Helen collected Gemma and me, and the excitement buzzed in the car. We rigged Duchess and motored out of the marina, exchanging friendly words with other competitors before the start signal. A few tacks later, we were making good progress out, past the breakwater. Janie kept us steady on course.







Then the waves began to build. Somewhere beyond Plymouth Sound, despite the precautionary seasickness pill Gemma had given me, my stomach surrendered. By the time we passed the L4 buoy, I was firmly out of action, pondering how sailors in 1492 managed to cross the Atlantic without modern comforts. Now from the back, I watched through half-closed eyes as Duchess danced over the waves.

Three moments cut through the haze:

- Janie's sharp manoeuvre rounding Eddystone Lighthouse while avoiding another boat in close quarters;
- A lone seal stretched out on a rocky ledge near the lighthouse, utterly unbothered by our passing; and
- The powerful opening of the spinnaker on our return leg, a tricky moment handled masterfully by Liz and Gemma.

As soon as we crossed back into the mouth of the Plym, my nausea vanished as if it had never existed. We "parked" Duchess, shared sandwiches and drinks, and then regrouped later for dinner before the prize-giving at the Aquarium. Beneath the dancing sharks, we discovered we had won the runner-up spot in the Company Challenge for the Smeaton Trophy, finished 11th overall, and most importantly raised just over £1,300 in sponsorship and prize money for St. Luke's Hospice.

Sailing on Duchess that day is something I will remember. Thank you to Janie and the crew for welcoming me aboard, for your patience, and for showing me what "woman sailing power" truly looks like.



Ballad National Championships 2025, Fowey

By Liz Atwood



Off to Fowey this year! The annual meeting of these particular Swedish cruise-racers came together under a rainy sky on the 6th of June 2025. Never to be deterred by a little damp, all owners and crew pulled out their wet weather gear and other forms of comfort to hear the run down on the race from our race officers at Fowey Royal Yacht Club.

Duchess had been scrubbed clean the week before, despite some technical difficulties with the usual dinghy - we welcome a challenge! Especially when helpful second dinghy extended crew support is available (thank you Caseys!).

A subset of her crew sailed Duchess over from Plymouth to Fowey on Friday the 6th of June, accompanied by new Ballad owner Kerstin Muller. Kerstin kept a great face while we battled through some active swell and quite interactive waves. We look forward to stories from sailing the Elbe and German Bight - Kieler Woche could definitely use a Ballad or two representing!





We all had an active time searching out buoys the first and second day. All were in good spirits and we were very happy to welcome Outlaw of Lundy back to the ranks, under skipper Kas Danes. Outlaw was looking very sharp, indeed!

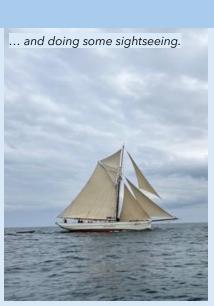
Every race started and ended with navigating the shifty wind tunnel of Fowey Harbour. I think it is safe to say everyone was very impressed by Windwhistle keeping up with us all on white sails alone, sometimes with a crew down to only two - kudos!

On Sunday, we were surprised to cross paths with a cutter that made one pause to conjure pictures of how things were a 100 years ago.¹

¹ Google image search tells me this is likely the Pellew, a 2020 replica of a 1852 Falmouth pilot cutter named Vincent. The original was in service out of St. Maws for 70 years, retiring in 1922.













Our local Fowey Ballad, Capella, would have sailed, but she unfortunately was not in the water on time! Owner Brian Runnalls still nicely joined the prize giving dinner at Fowey Royal Yacht Club, and brought some other locals who had sailed on Ballads before. Shebeen could not face the long 36-hour sail from Poole, but Ken and Sharon Morgan made the overland trip, and we were happy to have the opportunity to share stories over dinner with them every evening.

A successful Championships, with good wind, good food (thank you Gallant's!) and plenty of happy memories all round. Shara of York retained her leading position throughout the weekend, but we were sure to document whenever we got close to her tail feathers. Next year...



The 'Tea & Cake' races

By Phil Hayles



It is not often that the Ballad Nationals allow time for such luxuries as tea and cake during a race, but this year was different, and Duchess did it in style on the long down-wind leg of three of the four races with a selection of delicacies including Lemon Shortbread, homemade Maple Flapjacks, a gluten-free Almond & Cherry Cake and 'Herman', a sour-dough 'chain-letter' fruit cake.

The venue this year was the delightful village of Fowey. With a forecast predicting gales and thunderstorms our numbers were sadly reduced to just four boats. At the slightly damp skippers briefing there were even rumours of Saturday afternoon's race being cancelled, but that suggestion was quickly discarded, as Janie put it "but this is what Ballads were made for!".

A broken car in the first race reduced the numbers even further, with local boat Outlaw of Lundy having to retire early, leaving three boats to complete a short-ish but interesting course in the outer estuary. One of the buoys, "H", proved taxing for Duchess with at least three attempts (it might have been four) to round the mark in uncooperative, shifting winds.

Fluky, changeable winds seemed to be a common theme in the Fowey estuary, which made for some interesting starts and finishes with the wind seemingly coming from all directions at once.

A longer course for the second race took us across St. Austell Bay in a brisk south-westerly which resulted in another broken car, this time on Duchess, but after a quick rearrangement of the rigging she was able to continue in pursuit of Shara of York. Heavy rain and lumpy seas were making it difficult to spot the 'S' mark in the middle of the bay, so we played follow-my-leader in the expectation that Shara knew where she was going, although it later transpired that Shara was "following" Duchess from in front! Eventually the mark was rounded and up went the spinnakers (apart from Windwhistle, sailing under white sails with just two crew) for the run back round the Cannis Rock cardinal and back into Fowey.

Two similar courses on the second day proved less eventful, with lighter winds and even some sunshine, although there was one VERY nearmiss between Duchess and Shara whilst tacking between the moorings at the start of the last race which caused a little consternation from the bow. Luckily Janie did not realise at the time just how close it was!

All in all, we had a great weekend's racing with some excellent food provided by Fowey Gallants and Royal Fowey Yacht Club, and it was good to catch up with the other Ballad crews again, including Shebeen's who drove down from Poole to join us. Thanks to everyone involved in organising the event.





Rediscovering the joy of sailing through racing ballads

By Paul Morris



My sailing journey began in the mid-80s when I set sail as a cadet on Southampton Water. In the late 90s, I had the privilege of joining a crew for offshore racing. However, life took me away from the sport until the 2020s. In 2024, Peter and Cath graciously welcomed me back as a crew member aboard Shara of York, where I embarked on a Thursday night race series at Saltash.

The culture and camaraderie at the Saltash Sailing Club reignited my passion for sailing, and we enjoyed a successful year. Perhaps it was a bold decision for Team Shara to invite me back in 2025, but in a moment of weakness, they invited me to crew for the Ballad Nationals in Fowey in June 2025. My Ballad National adventures commenced as we relocated Shara from Saltash to Fowey.

As we navigated the calm south-westerly wind up the River Tamar, I braved the helm (Shara sailed herself naturally). However, as we crossed Plymouth Sound toward Cawsand Bay and Rame Head, the true nature of the day's wind became apparent. We faced hours of beating our way to the harbour entrance at Fowey. I swiftly handed the helm over and resumed my usual cockpit gorilla roles.

Fortunately, Peter and Philip encouraged me to take the helm again during the second half of the journey, allowing me to develop my skills. It was a welcome distraction to share this experience with Ballad Duchess, who was also *en route* from the Sound to Fowey Harbour for the racing.

This first leg of the Nationals journey provided an ideal opportunity to get to know Phillip, who was seasoned member of the Shara "A-Team". By the time we arrived, I felt a sense of achievement from the time spent sailing Shara to Fowey Harbour, coached and supported by Phillip and Peter.

On Friday night, the Royal Fowey Yacht Club brought together all the crews competing in the Nationals. It was heartwarming to see the familiar faces of those who had been sailing together for years, alongside new crews and owners preparing for the weekend ahead, all eagerly awaiting the race briefing.

The relatively small racing fleet and busy wider race schedule for Fowey Harbour, saw our start and finish lines within the Harbour. As a green competitor I did not fully understand the wave of twitching that caused across the other Ballad teams. As I would soon learn, having both the start and finish lines within the harbour adds a unique thrill and tactical challenge, the race is never truly over until you have crossed that line.

Day one of the Nationals included two races, the first in the morning, turning east at the harbour's exit. It was a short yet challenging course set against strong southwest winds and moderate seas. After navigating the morning's challenges, we welcomed our foredeck crew Victoria for the afternoon race, which took us west out of the harbour, across St. Austell Bay.

Day two featured two more races across St. Austell Bay, with many yachts, including ours, on the hunt for the elusive race buoys. Each race was fiercely contested, whether with spinnaker or white sail, among large crews or crews of two.

My final race experience built on my helming training, allowing me to experience the banter



and jostling across a hazard littered start line. I am grateful to Peter and the team for trusting and guiding me through that learning! After a long course, it culminated in an exhilarating battle with Duchess to the finish line.

Sunday evening brought the prizegiving ceremony, and it was fantastic to witness the fleet's support for one another, celebrating the numerous efforts of competitors. Royal Fowey and Fowey Gallants Sailing Club were outstanding hosts, we all felt incredibly welcomed, and the race committee and receiving Commodores displayed professionalism, friendliness, and provided great company throughout the weekend.

Reflecting on my journey through the Ballad Nationals, I am filled with gratitude for the experiences and friendships forged on the water. The thrill of racing, coupled with the camaraderie of fellow sailors, has rekindled my passion for sailing. Each race not only challenged my skills, but also deepened my appreciation for the sport and the vibrant community that surrounds it.

As I look ahead, I am eager to continue sailing and racing, embracing the challenges and joys that await. The Ballad Nationals have not only marked my return to sailing, but also reaffirmed the bonds that can be forged through shared passion and adventure. Here is to many more races and unforgettable moments on the water, ahoy Pirates!







Results Ballad National Championships 2025

PRIZE WINNERS

CATEGORY	TROPHY	BOAT
Overall winner	Jean Ellis Memorial Trophy	Shara of York
2nd overall	Upper Deck Trophy	Duchess
3rd overall	Toms Trophy	Outlaw of Lundy
Highest Plymouth yacht (outside the first three overall)	City of Plymouth Trophy	Not awarded
Highest Fowey yacht (outside the first three overall)	Pam Sheridan Trophy	Not awarded
Overall winner of the Whitesail division	Corinthian Trophy	Windwhistle
Winner of the pursuit race	Old Ferry Inn Trophy	Not awarded
Winner of the Concours d'Elegance	The Julian Foye Trophy	Outlaw of Lundy
Participating boat that has travelled furthest from her home port	Noakes and Habermehl Voyager Trophy	Shara of York



Notices



UK BALLAD ASSOCIATION AGM

All members are invited to the UK Ballad Association AGM on Saturday the 8th of November at the Saltash Sailing Club.

OBITUARY

Blavinge has joined the National Championships for many years recently and some will have met Elsa Stewart, who owned the boat jointly with Peter Askew. Sadly, she fell off a ladder gardening last year, damaging her spinal cord, and has been in a spinal rehab unit and in the University Hospital of Wales. Elsa passed away on Saturday 12th July 2025. She was born in Polruan and remained an ardent Cornish woman, coming to sailing later in life. She became co-owner of Blavinge in 2011, helping to deliver the yacht from Stockholm to Cardiff. She was a lifelong competitive swimmer, still winning trophies into her 60s.

UK BALLAD ASSOCIATION

CHAIR

Catherine Noakes (Shara of York)

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Janie Smallridge (Duchess)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ken Morgan (Shebeen)
Gemma Kulk

Gemma Kuik

NEWSLETTER

Gemma Kulk

WEBMASTERS

Sarah Cole and Peter Smallridge

WEBSITE

www.ukballadassociation.org

FOR SALE

Sula has been scrapped earlier this summer and various parts and equipment are for sale at vastly reduced cost:

- Furlex 204 (Sept 2019, excluding foil which was damaged during demasting)
- 130% No. 2 Genoa in DCXM laminate (August 2023, used only 4 hours; Cost new: £2,700)
- Mainsail in 7.52 High Aspect with cover (June 2018, used for 3 seasons; Cost new: £1,300)
- No.1 Genoa in Carbon sport laminate c/w lite skin finish (June 2018, used for 2 seasons; Cost new: £3,000)
- Asymmetric spinnaker and prodder (2008)
- Unused Raymarine ST2000 tiller pilot (June 2023; Cost new: £600)
- Raymarine i50 tridata, depth & speed instrument pack DST800 (June 2023)
- Raymarine Wireless Wind (June 2023; Cost new: £720)
- Various new deck and steaming lights, Hella Tri-colour LED Nav light and antenna (June 2023)
- Spray dodger (2010)
- 3-burner cooker oven
- 2x Lewmar self tailing winches (2008)
- And miscellaneous other parts.

Offers invited. Mark is based in Dartmouth, South Devon, England. Please email mark@bythedart.co.uk or call 07775 773837.



