

A Jammed Plate

By Chris Sharland (Shrimper 60, *Shellback*) (Spring 2010)

Most of this last sailing season, *Shellback* (60), built in 1981, has been sailed with only half a plate. Strangely this does not seem to have affected the boat's ability to sail to windward. However it was unsatisfactory not to be able to lower the plate completely.

When the boat came out of the water at the end of the season we put her under the hoist at Mengham Rythe SC and lowered the plate as far as it would go, which was about half-way, as expected. The plate was pressure-washed into the case from below and a saw blade run along either side of the plate. An amount of mud was removed and there seemed to be an obstruction someway aft of the centreboard bolt on either side of the plate. Still the plate could only be lowered half-way. Letting it go at the rush jammed the plate to such an extent that it had to be levered back using timbers on either side of the boat.

When I spoke to Cornish Crabbers they informed me that there were Tufnol blocks on both sides at the top of the plate, some way back from the swivel bolt. The aim of this was to stop the plate moving sideways in the slot. However, some 12 years ago they stopped fitting the blocks. For the first time in all the years I have owned my Shrimper, I was forced to seek professional help and went to the boat yard next to the club. The boat was lifted by crane and, with some difficulty, the plate was removed.

The first photo shows the plate having been in the boat since 1981. Considering this length of time, the plate was not in too bad a state. The Tufnol blocks can be seen aft of the pivot hole.

The second photo shows the plate after the edges had been ground to remove the rust and the Tufnol blocks removed. It was then treated with six coats of epoxy resin and, after much juggling, fitted back into the boat.

Tests showed that the plate could now be lowered and raised with ease. It will be interesting to see how the boat sails with a full plate.

I do not doubt that others have removed and replaced their plates, but it is certainly not a task to be undertaken lightly.

