

All Shiny Bright – Farécla Topside Restoration Workshop

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The effects of sun and sea on GRP hulls are well documented and there can be few owners who have not watched in dismay as their once gleaming topsides slowly fade and dull. All gel coats suffer discolouration to some extent when exposed to UV radiation, but it is on dark colours, which make up the bulk of the Shrimper fleet, where the effect is most noticeable. Remedies for prevention and cure abound and although some are successful, few have been known to last more than a season. Painting is often the preferred solution, but although this does work, it is not generally considered a DIY task, requiring specialist facilities and treatment. For those seeking a more user-friendly option a recent topside polishing workshop, arranged by Richard Pottinger (*Black Swan*, 434), in association with Farécla Products Ltd, at the Royal Motor Yacht Club, Poole, might provide the answer.

Farécla (Belgian for “Shiny Bright”) is a UK based company specialising in surface finishing. Their Automotive G3, G6 & G7 cutting and polishing compounds are widely used within the marine industry to obtain that wonderful “boatshow” shine. But, as David Taylor, Farécla Marine Business Manager, explained to the assembled 61 owners and crew, car paint finishes are much thinner and softer than polyester resins, so compounds designed for Automotive use are not ideal for gel coats. To overcome this deficiency Farécla has recently introduced two new ranges, *Profile* and *Marine*, specifically for use on GRP. The *Profile* range is the more aggressive, being intended for restoration of badly faded or discoloured surfaces using mechanical polishers. The *Marine* range can be applied by hand during routine maintenance to remove light surface blooming. Both treatments must be finished with at least two coats of a special wax polish formulated specifically for the marine environment and containing both UVA and UVB filters. In UK waters two coats of polish should last a season, but will need to be re-applied each year if the shine is to be maintained.

For those of us worried that repeated use of an aggressive surface cleaner might permanently damage the hull, Farécla explained that discolouration only occurs in the outer surface of the hull, typically 0.001 mm of a 0.5 to 0.8 mm thick gel coat. Removal of such a thin layer has minimal effect on overall gel coat integrity and can be repeated many times without significantly reducing its thickness. This is good news for Shrimper owners who were told that no surface finish, including paint, is immune from the effects of UV radiation and maintaining that showroom shine will always require subsequent treatments.

The final part of the workshop was a practical demonstration using Barry Mellor’s *Clementine* (849), who’s Racing Green topsides were starting to look a little tired. Also on hand was a gleaming *Black Swan* (434), loaned to Farécla for three months for use as a test bed during development of the topside restoration procedure. Both product ranges were demonstrated, but a test area quickly showed that use of the *Marine* range would not be practical on such a large area of faded hull. The demonstration therefore concentrated on *Profile* 200 & 300 cutting compounds applied using Farécla’s own rotary polisher. All agreed that the results were remarkable, a deep shine being returned to a large area of topsides within minutes. After cleaning off all traces of compound, application of the polish is simplicity itself – simply wipe on, leave for a short time and wipe off. Farécla estimates that Shrimper topsides could be cleaned and polished in about 2½ hours. Based on the demonstration, this seems very feasible.

On sale during the workshop were hull restoration kits assembled by Farécla for the SOA. Shown below is the Polishing Kit, featuring *Profile* products, intended for topside restoration, which can be bought with or without the polisher. Also available is a Maintenance Kit, using the *Marine* range, for retaining that showroom shine. Judging by the number sold we can expect to see some very shiny Shrimpers this season. More information on the products and their application will appear on the Technical section of the SOA website, www.shrimperowners.org, in due course. Also appearing on the website will be the results of a technical audit Farécla will be carrying on out on *Clementine* and *Black Swan* over the coming season to measure the effectiveness of their products.

The maintenance kits, plus information on possible future Farécla workshops, can be obtained from Richard Pottinger (*Black Swan 434*); tel: 01202 880121; email: richard.pottinger@repakp.co.uk.



Farécla Shrimper Polishing Kit



Clementine (849) - Top Strake has been cleaned & polished - lower strakes showing the effects of ten years of sun & sea. Note undamaged Shrimper logo.



The finished result - a gleaming *Black Swan* (434)