

Beaching Legs for a Cornish Shrimper

In March 2007 our family bought Shrimper 947 named "Osprey" and had her shipped to our home, the island of Guernsey. We had a lot of fun sailing Osprey last summer and even entered and won the Rocquaine Regatta "traditional boats" sailing race against the island's only other Shrimper.



One of the most popular destinations for Guernsey boating people is the island of Herm approximately 2 miles east of Guernsey and me and my son duly packed our sleeping bags and tea bags and made for Herm for a night on board. We had a great time. The weather was calm and we managed to grab a secure mooring just outside the picturesque Herm harbour. We even planned for the tide to give us the minimum amount of time dried out. We arrived at half tide down at about 6.00pm. Low tide was just after supper at 9.00pm and when we returned to Osprey for a nightcap and game of cards the tide was still out but on its way back up. All was as planned except that we hadn't realised just how inconvenient life is when a Shrimper is dried out and you want to turn in for the night. The angle meant that one berth was jolly comfortable with the lucky owner cradled between bunk and gunwhale but the other berth was jolly uncomfortable with occupier pinched in between bunk and centreboard case.

Eventually the tide came back and by midnight the water was under the keel and half an hour later we were afloat and on an even keel. Happy in the knowledge that we had six hours afloat we drifted off to sleep and pleasant dreams about.....beaching legs.

At around six in the morning the water drained away from under our keel and as we dried out we were compelled to get out of bed due to the discomfort of the list to port or starboard or whichever side we were leaning to. We made the most of our early start by polishing the hull and propeller followed by breakfast at the Mermaid Restaurant.

By lunchtime we had re-floated and we made our way back to St Peter Port in Guernsey under full canvas in a gentle breeze pleased with our maiden night aboard Osprey.

It was a great trip but we decided that the experience would be a hundred times better with beaching legs and duly resolved to make that our Winter project.

We decided that February was a good time to put Osprey onto her trailer and take her home for annual maintenance and to put into effect our improvement plans. First was the need to add a mast-head light for visibility at anchor or making for port after dusk. Second was the beaching legs project.

The "family" which owns the boat is basically my father Francis and myself Pierre ably assisted by the grandson and son, Robert. The mast-head light job was brilliantly executed by Grandfather and Grandson with the former providing the knowledge and the latter the agility required for the task.

Beaching legs and the necessary hull attachments were a different kettle of fish and we decided to employ a professional marine carpenter to make and fit the legs. Demand for good carpenters in Guernsey is very high and most decent carpenters have secured long term working relationships with the leading property developers. At first we were encouraged by the initial enthusiasm of two carpenters but their interest faded in the face of more lucrative contracts. After two months of waiting we decided to make the legs ourselves.

I mentioned earlier that my father is quite knowledgeable with regard to DIY especially woodwork and before long he had taken a template from the Shrimper hull and using this as a model he made a mock-up set of beaching legs. Whilst working on Osprey a chance conversation with a passer-by led to an offer to cut out the legs on his bandsaw. Two stout Iroko timbers were purchased and duly cut to shape under the template.

We decided on a single bolt per leg system to secure the legs to the hull which meant that we decided to strengthen the inside of the hull. This was achieved by removing the cabin lining planks and bonding a 20mm thick piece of oak to the port and starboard insides of the hull with Gripfill. The linings were replaced and the position of the inner mounting places were marked in pencil. We were ready and with some trepidation we drilled the main bolt hole on each side of the hull with a brand new 12mm bit. I drilled from the inside whilst my Dad held a block of scrap wood on the outer hull to ensure a neat hole. With the main bolt holes drilled we were able to secure the inner and outer mounting plates using the main bolt. Each inner and outer plate was a pair through which three smaller holes had been drilled to accept bolts to permanently hold the plates in situ. Each of the three requisite holes was drilled and the securing bolts inserted and tightened not forgetting large diameter rubber seals held in place with Thixofix on both the inner and outer plates. It all sounds like a doddle but it was a bit tricky to get the

plates and bolts and holes to line up just right. We had been as accurate as possible to minimise any gaps but we had to widen the inner side of each of the three smaller holes to get the necessary "wiggle room" to fit everything together. Once we had done this and we were happy we dis-assembled everything and applied liberal amounts of silicone sealant to all the holes before finally tightening everything into place.



With the plates in place we offered up the legs and marked the spot where we would drill the mounting hole in each leg. Naturally we included the thickness of the Flotex carpet tile we planned to stick to the inner face of each leg. When we were happy we drilled each hole on a pillar drill again using a piece of scrap wood to ensure neatness. Pieces of Flotex carpet tile were cut to shape and stuck in place with impact adhesive. The purpose of the carpet was to prevent the legs from scratching the gelcoat and I have used Flotex in a number of similar applications with excellent results.



The moment of truth had arrived and the legs were attached. We were delighted when they fitted perfectly, looked very handsome, in keeping and in proportion with the hull and with the Shrimper philosophy. Final measurements were taken with the legs in place marking the line of the keel against each leg then cut off the excess plus one inch to ensure that the legs would take the ground after the keel.

When we were happy with these final crucial measurements we took them back to the timber merchant to remove the excess and to ensure a straight cut ! Later we took the legs home for the first of their five coats of varnish.



With the legs ready we were itching to try them out and it wasn't long before we planned another quick overnight stay in Herm. The plan worked like a dream. Herm is a tiny island with a tiny drying harbour with a fine sandy beach stretching north from the quay. Our arrival in Herm was just after high tide and we picked up a free mooring and set about attaching the legs. With legs attached we swapped the mooring from bow to stern and nosed up the beach letting out our stern line as we nosed up the beach. As we grounded my son jumped into the shallow water and took two lines on to the beach and attached them to a heavy mooring chain laid down for this very purpose. With Robert back on board we pulled in on the stern line taking up the slack fore and aft ensuring that Osprey settled perpendicular to the beach when she dried out.



Ten minutes later the tide had duly receded and when we dried out Osprey remained upright with the beaching legs doing their intended job. We celebrated by putting on the kettle and having a cup of tea and a biscuit on the level.

Supper that night was taken in The Mermaid Tavern where we cooked our own food on their "Black Rock Grill" where each diner receives a block of granite super-heated to 400°C on which to cook.

Well fed and watered we returned to Osprey for a hot chocolate and hand of cards before a restful night's sleep without the inconvenience of being at an angle. As I lay there in my sleeping bag I was delighted to realise just how little noise there was. I'm not talking about chatty neighbours and there is no traffic in Herm. The quiet I'm referring to is the absence of squeaks and creaks from fenders and ropes that is part of marina life. Being dried out there was no hull movement to create any noise and slapping rigging is easily controlled with a bungee cord or two. It was bliss and we soon fell asleep !

Our slumbers were interrupted at 4.00am as the tide returned gently lifting us on its bosom. We checked the lines to ensure all was well and went below and back to sleep until about 7.00am when I estimated we'd have to leave as we didn't want to dry out again. Robert opened one eye at 7.10am and shouted that he could "see the bottom" so we jumped up and dressed quickly; fired up the engine cast off the lines and gently motored astern and picked up a spare mooring in deeper water. Secure again and with more time before the tide we tidied away the lines removed and stored the legs and returned to Guernsey. We were back in our marina berth by 9.00am having had a nice cup of tea en route from Herm.

So, our first night sleeping on board using the beaching legs had been a great success and we hope to have several repeat trips this Summer.