

Bow Eyes

The Inside View

By Graeme Bowles, Shrimper 268 (2006)

I have recently become a Shrimper Owner by acquisition, this Autumn, of "Jaunty" (268 o/b). One aspect that I was keen to explore was the nature and condition of the important but not easily accessed inboard end of the bow-eye.

The bow-eye is accessed by removing the bulkhead, for which you need to remove the two bolts attaching the samson post and five or six screws. With a bit of a jiggle, the bulkhead, complete with storage bins, then lifts clear and out round the mast support. I found that the bulkhead plywood tends to flex while the grp bins are rigid, which causes the bin screws to pop out of the wood as they are small screws with only shallow penetration. I replaced my corner screws with through screw bolts and washers, which makes a more satisfactory fixture.

Having removed the bulkhead, I was then faced with large blocks of expanded polystyrene buoyancy. I numbered these for ease of replacement. They took some getting out without breakage and the resultant squeaking was enough to clear the neighborhood of cats.

With the buoyancy removed, the bow area and eye backing pad were revealed in all their glory. My eye was in perfect condition after about 15 years in service with no signs of cracking or leakage. The backing pad could perhaps be bigger but it is obviously satisfactory as is. So, best left well alone but I always feel that it is good to get to know your boat thoroughly. I will certainly be more confident hauling out on the trailer or lying on moorings knowing what's there.



And If It Breaks Before You Check It..

By Norman Hunston, Shrimper 355 (Spring 2001)

Bow-eyes have been known to break; mine did some years ago, damaging the surrounding gelcoat, and leaving *Vagabond* moored only by the insubstantial back-up rope from the samson post. Fortunately this happened just the day before I was due to pull out for the winter, so replacement and repair could be carried out ashore. My subsequent inexpert annual bodging kept the gelcoat repair looking reasonable, but by no means pristine.

Last winter, close examination (on the advice of John Benge, No 433) revealed serious cracking of the gelcoat repair, and transverse cracks in the bow-eye itself. Positive action was called for! Being something of a technophobe, and a coward to-boot, the prospect of digging out the damaged fibreglass - by now quite a large area - effecting a "proper" repair, and fitting a new bow-eye, did not immediately appeal to me. That's when John, who is neither technophobe nor coward, took the situation in hand, assuring me it was not a problem.

"Just don't look while I'm doing the angle-grinding," he said. I didn't. "Trust me -I'm a doctor" he said. I did - just! While I made the coffee, he carved out a sizeable chunk of fibreglass. Refilling the hole, and profiling the gelcoat, I found positively therapeutic - John even allowed me to do some final smoothing off with ultra fine gauge wet and dry. Holes for the bow-eye u-bolt were then drilled, from the inside and VERY carefully.

Now for the point of this article - the design mod. By fitting the new bow-eye plate, suitably angle-ground to fit the shape of the stem, on the outside, the gelcoat is protected both from the pressure of tightening the nuts, and also from any lateral pressures imposed by the mooring chain. The old plate is used inside, as before.

So take my advice and have a good look at that bow-eye of yours. And if you want any technical advice, John Benge is your man - only don't tell him I said so!

