Shrimper 21 Floor Replacement

Jon Davies – S21-36 *Merriwinds*

The floor needs to be sat on a neoprene strip to help prevent water ingress and prevent direct fibreglass to fibreglass contact. It then needs to be sealed with silicone to make it as watertight as possible. Before starting, all traces of the old sealant tape must be removed. This pulls off quite easily but leaves a sticky residue behind. I eventually found that anti-fouling thinners removed it, but there must be plenty of other similar things that will also do the job. As silicone does not stick to itself very permanently, all traces of the old silicone must also be removed. This is not an easy job, but I was reasonably successful using a Stanley scraper with a new Stanley knife blade and pushing it down vertically on to the step. Most of the old silicone will come away, then finish off with a coat of silicone removal gel. It is all a bit messy but will finally leave clean fiberglass.

It is very important to remove all traces of the old silicone 'doughnuts' that seal the cockpit drain holes. These I cleaned with a sharp chisel and then finished off with generous doses of silicone removal gel and a wire brush. Once all traces of old adhesive etc. have been removed, and the cockpit carefully vacuumed clean, we can think about the replacement sealant strip. I was recommended to use a one-sided neoprene adhesive strip 25mm x 5mm. This is a bit thicker than the original but seemed to fit perfectly. The strip was laid around the step with triangles cut in the corners to enable a continuous seal. A 6-metre roll is just enough but I ended up 10 cm short because, thinking I had plenty, I had chopped a piece off the end to 'practise' with, and then had to make a couple of butt joints from a new roll to finish it off. The result was a reassuring continuous seal all around with no gaps.

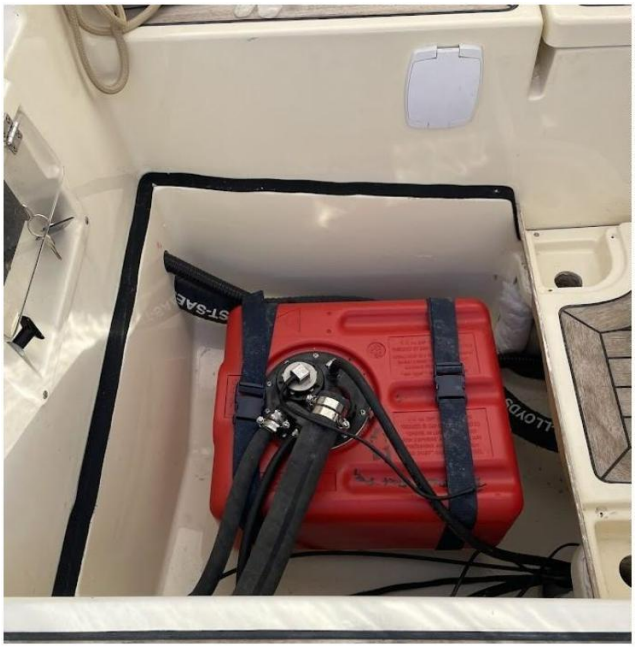
After a last check that the bolts and jubilee clips are all tight below, we are now ready for the front floor. This can be manoeuvred into position to ensure it all fits correctly. Once in place, raise the rear end about 8 inches and block it in that position. You can now generously use the silicone gun to make two rings of silicone around the lower drain holes. When positioned 'dry' there is a gap of about 5-6 mm between the mouldings so the silicone rings must be twice this thickness. It now remains to gently lower the floor into position The mastic rings will squash out to give a good seal around the holes. I suspect that, with temperatures below 10c it will be some time before it is fully cured however. After a dab of mastic into each screw hole, the floor can be screwed down.

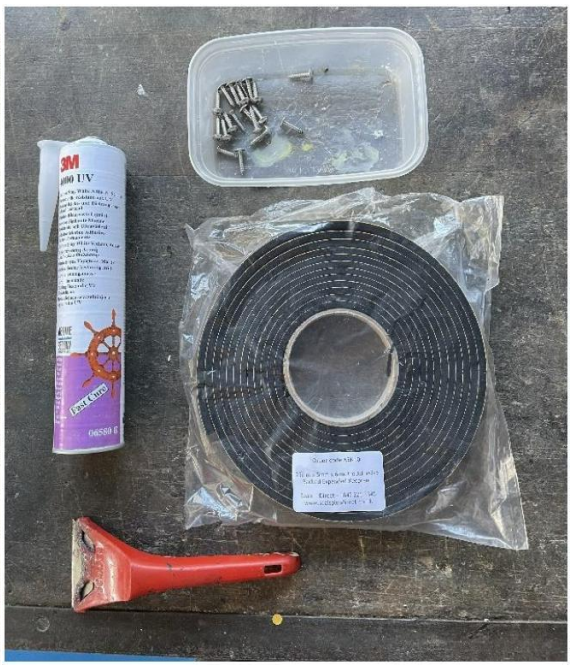
If the fuel tank was removed the next task is to replace its base mouldings and straps before putting the tank in and attaching all the pipes. The fuel gauge wires are soldered and sealed with heat shrink tubing.

Next, we need to put a batten across the rear of the front floor where it was cut so that the mastic sealant will not get pushed through the gap between the two pieces of floor. I used some marine ply fastened with countersunk screws, hidden by the stainless strip. (Make sure the countersunk screws don't coincide with the screw holes in the strip). The batten only needs to be about 10mm above the lip.

We can now put the rear floor into position and screw it down. To cover the saw cut I used some polished stainless strip bought online. It comes as a piece 1000mm x 40mm x 1.2mm and needs cutting to the exact width and drilling. I bought stainless screws that exactly matched those originally used by the builders. After a liberal application of silicone, the stainless strip was screwed into place, hiding the join. The last job is the very careful application of a thin bead of silicone all around the floor mouldings. This is not easy to do neatly, and masking tape can help keep the lines straight.

The first photo shows the tank back in place and the sealant strip stuck down ready for the rear part of the floor. (The front floor is already in place). The second photo shows the roll of tape from ‘Seals Direct,’ the 3M 4000 UV silicone used for the final sealing bead, the little scraper for the old silicone and some of the matching screws (4.2 x 19mm A2 Pozi Flange Self Tapper BS 4174).





The last photo shows the floor, with its woodwork undamaged, installed with the stainless strip, but before the final silicone bead.