

Shrimper 19 Cockpit Step n Stow

Keith Thatcher – Shrimper 810 Constance – May 2022

In spring 2018, after fifteen seasons taking us around the UK and further afield, Jackie and I said farewell to our Mk 1 outboard *Winkle* (144) and welcomed *Constance* (810), a Mk 2 inboard, into the family. Our new boat has definite benefits, such as more cabin space and an engine that starts at the press of a button (Jackie never did get on with the outboard), but has one big drawback for those of us who are vertically challenged. When re-designing the cockpit, Cornish Crabbers chose to keep the side benches at the same height as original, making the step up onto the foredeck 100 mm higher. The sloping cabin bulkhead is also further aft, making the shrouds difficult to reach from the cockpit side benches, so going forward is a real struggle. In addition, the forward cockpit seat with ledge under, fitted to Mk 1 boats, has been removed so the Mk 2 does not have any secure cockpit stowage.

To overcome both problems we came up with a “Step n Stow” - essentially a plywood box with a lift up lid to sit on the cockpit bench against the cabin bulkhead to provide stowage and a step up onto the foredeck. The box was designed using standard stair dimensions, i.e. 6 inches (150 mm) high x 10 inches (250 mm) tread and is 18 inches (460 mm) wide, which fits nicely between the hatch trim and the cockpit coaming.

Basic construction of the box is in 12 mm plywood with a top of 18 mm plywood, all screwed and glued together. The joints could just as easily be pinned and glued, but I found it easier to pre-assemble the box dry to check dimensions and fit against the boat. Once satisfied with the fit the box was dismantled and screwed back together using Gorilla Glue in the joints. This allowed for the screws to be removed so the box corners could be faired, particularly the forward face lower corner which needs to have a 12 mm radius to match the GRP cockpit moulding. The lift up lid has two 75 mm wide stainless steel butt hinges mounted vertically (I bought mine from Toolstation, current price (2022) £1.98 for two. Not sure how long they will last, but at this price they can be replaced regularly). The hinge plates are wider than the 18 mm plywood lid, so wooden packing pieces were fitted to the underside in way of the hinges. The complete box was given four coats of varnish prior to attaching the lid after which I applied 25 mm wide self-adhesive tread strip to the top in diagonal strips to provide a non-slip finish.

The only critical stage in the construction was deriving the angle of the forward panel, which needs to match the slope of the aft cabin bulkhead. I carefully measured the angle and made both side panels the same, only to discover that neither the bulkhead nor the side bench is flat, both angles increasing as you go outboard. It is not feasible to twist ½ inch plywood, so to compensate I fitted small wedge shaped packing pieces on the bottom (aft) and forward face (top) on the outboard side of the box (see note on drawing and photo of the outboard end).

To hold the box securely in place I use two pads of 50 mm wide self-adhesive Industrial Velcro (Screwfix this time - £7.99 for 50 mm x 1 metre) with the loop part attached to the boat. This enables the box to be removed and placed in the cabin when *Constance* is on her berth. I also fitted thin rubber pads on each corner of the base to stop the box sliding if the cockpit bench is wet.

The “Step n Stow” box has now been in use for four seasons and has proved a great success, making access to and from the foredeck much easier and safer - and we now have somewhere dry to keep our toffees and other cockpit essentials.



In Position in cockpit



Box tipped aft to show the Velcro attachment



Outboard side showing the fit alignment wedges on top forward and aft bottom corners.



Inside showing wooden extensions at the hinges to allow adequate thickness for the screws

