BOAT REPAIRS & ALTERATION.

By Nige Dale.

I mentioned to my wife in passing when we were out walking one day a dozen or so years ago, that I would like the time to make a radio controlled boat. The response was that, if I didn't make the time to do it now before I became too old and senile, then you would have nothing to play with when you were. Taking this as a green light I purchased a "Sail away" and approached the DSMBC about membership. The "Sail away" was to be used as a prompt to get the preverbal back side moving, and as they say, the rest is history.

The picture above is of the boat I brought, a Kingfisher Lobster Boat. A nice little boat developed for mass production, sat well on the water, and did what it was supposed to do; and got me hooked on small model boats.

With continued use, the rigging became tatty so I removed most of that and then changed the deck clutter to suit the lack of rigging. The green hull looks fine off the water, but when on the water on a darkening Thursday evening at County Hall Worcester, highlighted the limitations of such a colour when sailing near the opposite bank resplendent in vegetation of a similar hue.

Alterations.

The limitations of a dark colour in fading light for visual identification and location purposes was proven by the collision from another boat which was minding its own business quietly whistling to itself whilst cruising around the pond. (My apologies Bob.) Fortunately the outcome was that the other boat was not apparently damaged (at least I know of none) but the need to do something about the colour of the hull and its propensity to go into stealth mode in the most inappropriate times was pressing, so I painted it white.

The white hull suited the boat better than the green, and whilst painting the

hull it dawned on me that; the deck which comes off as a complete unit to gain access to the workings below, could have a different deck and structure made to change the boat from one type to another. So I made another top for the boat.

The new top for the boat was made from scraps of wood and bits from within the shed, some of which were the residues of the Tirley build, the model of a River Severn Grain Barge. The new top didn't take long to make as there was no pattern against which to make it. It was a case of; this is the concept, see what you can do, so I did.

The new top on a white hull.

The new top looked fine and it offered me what essentially was two boats using the same hull. I came across some very small Teddy Bears whilst on holiday in Dorset, so I brought three of them and installed them as passengers and crew.

The original deck and layout of the lobster boat was starting to shows the signs of terminal decline. The flaking paint was not without merit as a feature of a working boat in a saline environment, but the ever increasing population of examples of repair, some of which were hastily done, and the resulting lack of use prompted me to make another top.

The other top.

The new top was a pseudo tug/ river boat, again made with bits and pieces from the shed. The new top looks the part and although the boat is a little bit more top heavy it still handles well. Of the two tops I have made for this hull, the tug/ river boat is marginally my favourite.

I have cut another deck pattern onto which I will put another structure at some point in the future to give me three different tops, but as for now the pattern is in storage with the occasional ”hello” from the shelf reminding me the pattern is still waiting for the time when I decide to do something with it.

Repairs.

As with all things with moving parts, those moving parts wear out with time. The boat started to make some rather nasty growling sounds (it certainly wasn't a cheerful hum) which announced the failure of a prop tube bearing, with the offending bearing being the one nearest the prop.

During the building of the Hydroplane, I needed to modify a stern tube to accommodate a centre bearing, for this bearing I got Steve of Model Boat Bits to machine it in his work shop, and so it was to Steve I turned to, to make the replacement bearings needed to repair this boat.

The bearing was tiny and to aid handling and not to lose it within the folds of an envelope, I mounted it on the existing prop shaft and sent it off to Steve with a request for two replacements. I received a phone call from Steve telling me that the shaft was non-standard and measured 2.94mm in diameter, and that to get a drill and reamer that size was not going to be cost effective. I already appreciated the fact that a 3mm shaft was non-standard, but some manufacturers embraced individuality, but a 2.94mm shaft? That; was stretching the individuality principle a bit too far.

The decision was made for Steve to make a new shaft using 3mm S/S and to supply bearings to suit. This added a further problem where a new standard propeller has a 4mm plus internal thread and would not fit the new prop shaft. The prop shaft tube was measured and determined as not being standard either; thus removing the possibility of fitting a 4mm prop shaft as the support bearings would have been so thin they would have been impracticable to make and fit. So Steve modified a new prop with a reduction bush, and posted back the parts.

I didn't take any photos of the prop shaft or bearings, because if you have seen one then you have seen them all. The boat was put back together and tested in the water feature/ pond/ test tank and deemed fit for purpose.