

## Shaft glands (Oct 2000)

### 1) Shaft glands – pre-launch preparation

There are a number of different types of shaft glands fitted to Sadlers and Starlights and some of the later types do give cause for concern if the right preparatory action is not taken prior to launching.

First of all, let me say that the traditional style shaft gland with packing and provision for injection of grease does not pose a problem and this is the way all the early Sadlers were done until about 1982. From about that time, Sadlers fitted “no maintenance” shaft glands with an oil reservoir feeding to neoprene rings, to maintain the water seal and neither do these pose a threat at launching.

The problem arises with the Deep Sea Seal which holds back the water as a result of finely machined and adjusted contact faces and the Volvo seal which depends upon a rubber boot containing neoprene.

A fundamental requirement with both the last two types of seal described, is to allow the water to dribble through the gland when first launching. If you look at the instruction leaflet, you will find that with a Deep Sea Seal, you should ease the two surfaces apart until the water dribbles through and then allow them to go back again through natural pressure of the rubber boot. Once lubricated, the seal is satisfactory for the rest of the time the boat is afloat and requires no maintenance at all. The same procedure should be applied to the Volvo seal, except this is achieved by squeezing firmly the rubber boot, thus distorting slightly the neoprene ring seal and allowing the water to dribble through. Once this job has been done, the seal is entirely maintenance free.

These maintenance free seals were fitted to all Sadlers from about 1989 and most of the Starlight 35s.

The Starlight 39 was fitted with a traditional stuffing box type of shaft gland, which requires normal maintenance, but no necessity to allow the water to flow pre-launch.

We are bringing this to your notice because we have become aware of several Sadlers locally, which were launched by owners, who were unaware of the launch procedure. The result in all cases was for the rubber boot to disintegrate, thus allowing water to flow in, which if undetected would have swamped the boat. Most owners are aware of the launch procedure. However, do check which seal you have and refer to the maintenance instructions, particularly with regard to launch procedure.

Useful tip. It is worth mentioning that periodically, the prop shaft should be drawn out and cleaned up in the area of the cutlass bearing. This section of the prop shaft will invariably have built up a “crust”, which accelerates wear in the cutlass bearing and also on the shaft itself. Once the shaft is drawn out from the cutlass bearing, this can be thoroughly cleaned and then re-assembled as it was. This also gives the opportunity to check the coupling, with its fastening bolts, to clean off surplus rust and ideally paint over with a rust preventative paint, such as Hamerite. We plan to write a technical article about cutlass bearings in due course.