

How to Improve your Cockpit Seating

1. **Historical.** Early Sadlers all had teak battens through fastened into the moulded cockpit seating. This was an entirely practical solution and used previously on the Contessa range of boats. As time progressed however, leaks would develop where the battens were fastened into the GRP and the teak battens tended to split.

By 1984 Sadler were beginning to use teak faced ply with a fairly thin veneer on the top and Sikaflex type caulking. Small section teak mouldings were then fitted to cover the end grain of plywood and these ran fore and aft up the inboard side of the cockpit for the Sadler 34. This teak moulding was held in position with copper tacks which created splits in the wood and also were uncomfortable (and dangerous!) to sit on. Most 34s have by now worn through the teak veneer and owners are having difficulty keeping the teak mouldings in place.

In about 1988 an improved method became available which was two layers of 3mm teak glued together and arranged with Sikaflex caulking running fore and aft. This was then fitted to the 26 and the 29 and in due course to the 34. A much improved system, this has lasted well on boats built since 1989 and only appears to give trouble where the glued joint fails. However, 29 owners will know that a hollow in the bridge deck area results in water laying there and creating problems at the front end of the cockpit.

2. **New materials.** We are having some success fitting solid teak in cockpits to replace the old teak seating or the batten arrangement. Prefabricated panels are now available made of solid teak and shaped to fit each Sadler model with attractive Sikaflex caulking arranged fore and aft. This is 8mm sanded teak and therefore requires no edging or beading.

To replace existing seating, it is first necessary to remove the old teak and make good the surface beneath. All through holes should be filled and any damage to GRP areas made good.

The teak panels are supplied ready for fitting and can be laid on a bed of Sikaflex 290, which is the latest version of this excellent compound. It has been proven over the past three years as an excellent deck caulking sealant. It is UV resistant and is relatively easy to apply and there is a special 290 DC Primer to use, supplied by the same company. It is not necessary to use through fastenings providing weight is applied during the curing process. However, a limited number of fasteners are useful to locate each panel in it's selected position. These few screws can then be removed, bored out and the holes suitably plugged with teak.

3. **Cockpit sole.** To complete the attractive appearance of the cockpit, also available is the same type of teak panel to fit onto the cockpit sole. In this case of course, there is nothing to be removed, since almost all Sadler cockpit soles are plain GRP and it only requires sanding and cleaning up to prepare the surface.

Clearly, for the 26 and 34, it is possible to do a full length single piece, suitably scalloped at the aft end for the self drainers. In the case of the 29 and 32 with a lifting cockpit sole (storage trough beneath), then the cockpit sole is supplied in two separate panels, to enable the centre trough lid to be raised.

4. **Teak grating.** There is an alternative to fitting a Sikaflex caulked cockpit sole and that is to supply a teak grating. This is still the top choice for many people and it certainly makes the cockpit look attractive. However, as a practical flooring there is much to be said for the "easy clean" surface of a Sikaflex caulked cockpit sole. Interestingly, the price for both methods is about the same.

5. **Conclusion.** All the units described above are available now from Mike Lucas Yachting and the prices are shown in the equipment price list enclosed in the magazine. These panels can either be supplied for owner fitting or can be fitted by a shipwright in your local yard or marina. Alternatively, we suggest bringing the boat to Dartmouth at some convenient time and the job can be done either during the winter, or in a two to three day break during a summer cruise. At the same time we can

undertake general refurbishment work.

Anybody interested, should give Mike Lucas a call for further information