

Self-draining cockpits (Nov 2000) - 25/06/2004

Self draining cockpits – check out the hose and fastenings

There is a tendency for most owners to assume that self-draining cockpits will look after themselves because, operation is automatic. The reality is that any malfunction of the drains does severely endanger the safety of the craft. This will arise either through a drain blockage or the hose detaching from the spigot or seacock.

Take care during the winter (when the boat is ashore) that leaves do not fill the cockpit and block the drain hose. We have learned only this month of a Sadler 29 which experienced this problem, the water flowed into the cockpit stowage trough, through into the engine bilge and then overflowed into the cabin, where it proceeded to fill up the boat to the level of the sole boards.

Each of the Sadler and Starlight models has a different layout and I now make a few comments for each boat.

Starlights

Both the 39 and 35 drain in a similar manner, from spigots glassed in to the drains at aft end of cockpit, proceeding downwards to skin fittings fitted to the underside of the quarter of the boat. Clearly these fittings are above the water line at rest, but underway they will be underwater. The outlet spigots are joined with good quality reinforced hose which after ten years is still likely to be in reasonable condition. However, do check the jubilee clips (which should be two at the top and two at the bottom) for security. After ten years there is probably a case for replacing the hose since it will by now have aged and hardened. When replacing, do take the opportunity to route the hose so that it is clear of gear and equipment stowed in the lazarette lockers.

Sadler 34

These are done in a similar manner to the Starlight, but upto 1989, the hose fitted by Sadler Yachts was not reinforced. The hose certainly needs replacing with reinforced or ribbed hose and at the same time, check jubilee clip fastenings. Also check that lazarette contents do not apply pressure on the vulnerable hose and hence the fastenings.

Sadler 32

Access to the self-drainers can be obtained by lifting the cockpit floor and the stowage trough out of position. In the case of the 32 the cockpit drains go outwards to seacocks fitted in the sail locker (port side) and under the quarter berth (starboard side). These seacocks must be serviced annually with the other seacocks and hull openings in the boat, but in practice I find they are rarely examined. As previously, replace the old hose and double clip all joints.

Sadler 29

Like the 32 the self-drain hose can be accessed through the cockpit sole lid and by lifting the stowage trough. However the drain hose with the 29 goes aft and out through transom skin fittings. Because these are difficult to get at (particularly the transom fittings) it is vital to service these components when ashore for the winter.

Sadler 26

This is an almost impossible situation in that you need to be extremely small and agile to get access to where the hose is attached to the cockpit spigots and then to the skin fittings through the transom. The problem with the 26 is that there is no removable cockpit sole panel. Access to the starboard side is just about possible by climbing into the sail locker and working headfirst through to the transom. There is no doubt that the hose will then need replacing and securely fixing with double jubilee clips. The port side is impossible to access and I suggest that you crawl down into the far end of the quarter berth and cut out a suitable rectangular aperture to enable access to the spigot and skin fitting to be obtained. Having cut the panel out, tidy up the saw cuts and make up a teak frame to go around the removable panel which can then be screwed into position with self tappers.

Sadler 25

The self-drainers are situated similar to the 26. However access is much easier through the lifting

aft locker lid, where the necessary work can be done.

Regular maintenance

I recommend that a check be carried out on the self-drain hoses every winter, because any malfunction when afloat would be difficult to rectify. Should any owners have a further contribution to make on this matter then why not post it on the Discussion Forum