

S III - REBUILD

PART 6 RUBBING STRAKES/ HANDRAILS

You will be fortunate indeed if your rubbing strakes are in good condition unless they have already had some attention from a previous owner.

Quite often I have been able to salvage them by splicing in pieces of varying lengths but it is only worth doing this if most of it is intact and in good condition.

The strakes are fastened to the hull with c'sk s.s. self-tapping screws or c'sk brass screws about 1" long about every 6" inches. The original section of the mahogany was quite unusual, almost like a stubby rounded off inverted triangle.

To splice a piece, first cut away the damaged area and shape your wooden strip roughly to the correct section. Cut at about 45° and position your first replacement screw such that when you bend the strake to follow the sheer, the angled joint is forced together rather than apart. To fix a screw you must drill through the strake and the hull (straight through the hull) which comprises the skin of the deck overlap, the filler and the skin of the hull with a drill which is the root diameter of the screw you are using. Then open up the hole in the wood to screw clearance and countersink so that the screw head will be below the surface of the wood.

Make sure you have your drill sizes correct by screwing one right up tight. This is the most important part of the job so take your time and get it right. The screw must go in all the way and be very tight, but not tight enough to break the screw. I find it impossible to do this with cross head screws so I strongly recommend slotted heads.

Carefully bend the wood to follow the hull/deck line and drill and fix each screw separately and firmly one at a time. When you have it all in place you can shape the section to match the existing section with a shoulder plane or surform and then sand down.

Then - wait for it - carefully remove the piece and varnish it both sides and at the angled ends and varnish the end of the existing piece. If you do not do this your splice will not last a season as water will ruin it. When you replace the piece apply sealant to the back of the the strake and the end joins , screw up, clean away excess sealant and leave for a few days before you finish with a few more coats of varnish.

If you need to replace the whole of the rubbing strake the technique is just the same. I used to try to shape the section like the original when I replaced them, but now I just use a rectangular mahogany strip (1 3/8" x 5/8") finished size is just about right and I shape this into a flat D before fitting. The size is big enough to look good and small enough to

✓ bend. It is quite difficult to buy mahogany in 18' lengths so I buy 9' lengths and splice once per side.

HANDRAILS - remove, strip, then varnish and replace by bedding them on sealer. I use silicone sealer which must be thoroughly cleaned off before you finish varnishing.

Quite often the wood of the handrails has deteriorated where it is in contact with the coachroof. You can take as much as 1/4" or 3/8" off these surfaces before you varnish and replace without affecting the look of the handrails. If the handrails are past redemption then new ones are the order of the day!

NOTE - If the hull/ deck of the boat is going to be painted, do this before refitting either the rubbing strakes or handrails.

You have now improved the appearance of your boat 100% and you are well on your way to having a very smart little number!