



CONTESSA 32 CLASS ASSOCIATION TECHNICAL PAPER

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CONTESSA SMELL SWEETER



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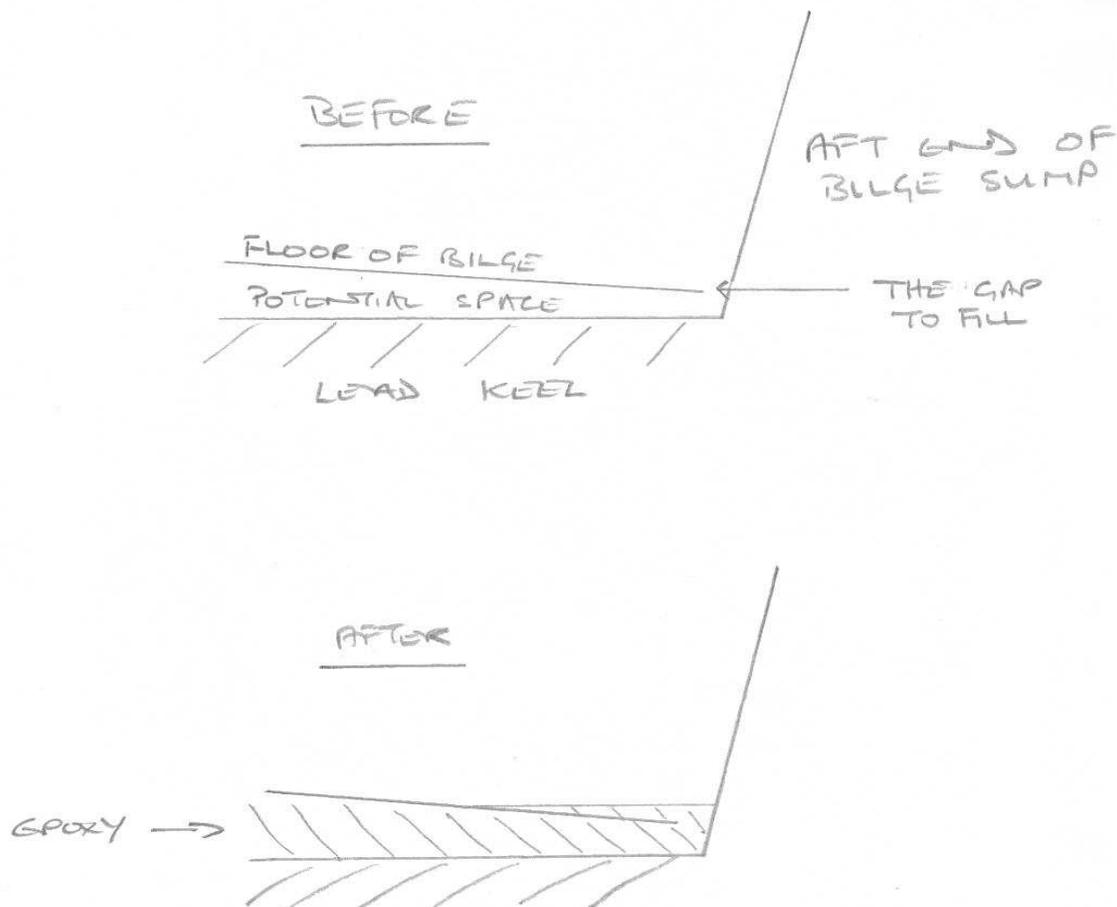
DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

You may have noticed that your pride and joy has a vile smell about her particularly after a bit of a blow. No amount of cleaning will rid you of this pong. On board Katisha this got so bad my wife refused to sail on her!

The problem is that there is a small void between the top of the lead keel and the floor of the bilge. There is a communication to this potential space at the aft end of the bilge sump where the floor does not quite close the gap – see diagram. I am not sure if this exists in all the boats but it certainly did in Katisha and others I have seen.



Over the years this space fills with old oil, water, bits of food and other detritus that has fallen into the bilge in the 30 years or more they have been afloat. This slowly turns into a pungent vile mess whose aroma pervades

the whole boat. It is impossible to remove by pumping out the bilge and no amount of Bilgex will prevent it smelling.

It is not really possible to see the problem until you empty the space from below as it always has some water in it. If you dare and your arm is long enough you can feel the gap with a finger tip.

SOLUTION

Unfortunately the only way to effectively drain this space is to drill a hole in the bottom of the boat and let the foul water drain out. Obviously the boat needs to be ashore to achieve this.

You first have to find the top of the lead ballast. The way to do this is to tap with a small hammer from the bottom of the keel upward. At about two feet from the base of the keel it will stop sounding "dead" and sound hollow – this is the top of the lead. This is where to drill the hole – see photo – X marks the spot! We only drilled one hole – I believe others have drilled more – but I don't really see the point.



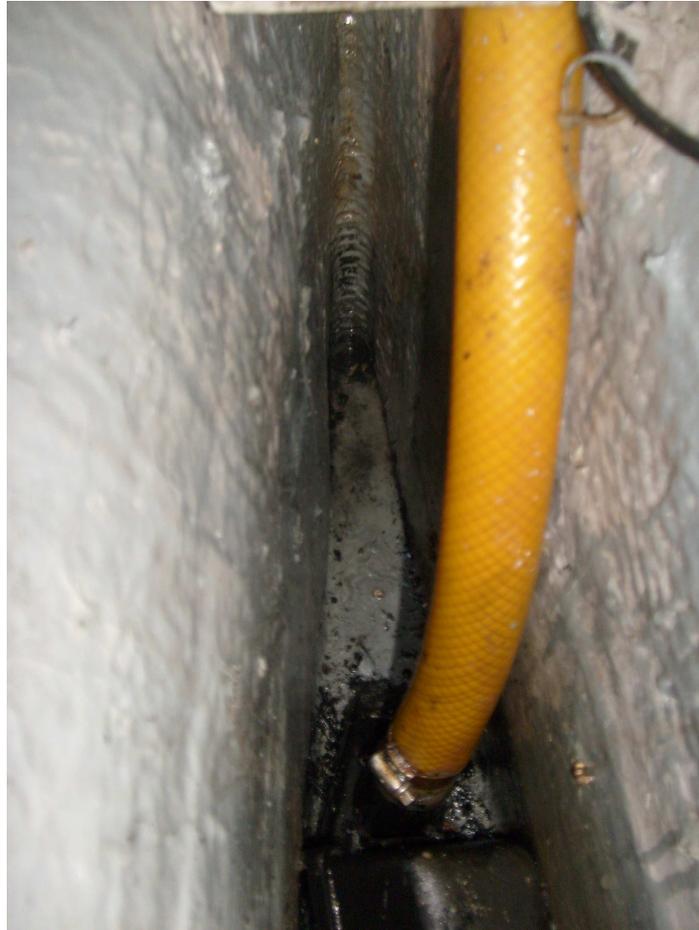
We drilled a 15mm hole and as we got through the GRP we released a foul cocktail that was clearly the cause of the smell. Once this had run out we could see in the bilge where it had got in as the gap was revealed.

We then spent a lot of time flushing the space. Water poured into the bilge runs out of the hole. We stoppered the hole and filled it with a variety of degreasers and smell removers.

We used Bilgex, bleach and washing powder. Once it was running clear all the time we filled it again with almost neat bleach and left it for several weeks. I am not sure this is strictly necessary but seemed like a good idea!

At this point we tried to estimate the volume of the space by filling it until it entered the bilge and then running out the contents into a jug – it was approximately 2 litres – but I expect this will vary between boats. I did this so that I would have an idea how much epoxy to use. However I am not sure it is necessary to completely fill the void, rather you only need to stop stuff getting in there by closing the gap in the bilge sump.

Having let the space dry out for another week or two we then poured epoxy down the hole in the bilge until it ran out of the hole in the keel. We made the mixture quite weak initially so that it would flow and not set too quickly. Once it appeared at the forward end we taped over the hole and continued pouring mixture in the top until no more would go in and the hole in the bilge space was completely filled over – see photo.



We then made good the hole in the keel and faired it over. After a season of sailing I can safely say the bilge no longer smells and that the exercise has been a success. I still haven't managed to get my wife to sail – but maybe that's a good thing.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS

None

SUPPLIERS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you would like any additional information about how to proceed with upgrades or repairs to your Contessa 32 an excellent forum is available on the Association website where you can post questions and draw on the collective knowledge of many owners.

Contessa 32 owners are in the very lucky position to be able to contact the original and current manufacturer of Contessa yachts, the team at Jeremy Rogers Yachts are extremely helpful and will offer free advice to owners as well as historical information about your particular Contessa. Jeremy Rogers Yachts can provide a range of spare parts and will carry out repairs both small and large, their contact details can be found on the Jeremy Rogers website

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