



# Laying Up

*A simple guide on preparing your boat for the Winter months.*

It's the end of the season and you're planning to lay up your boat for the winter months. But have you prepared yourself for the cold months ahead? The smallest things could cause the biggest problems when you bring your boat back out in Spring so we've prepared a simple yet effective guide you can use to ensure you'll be ready to go!

## **Before your boat has been lifted and is still in the water:**

- Being in the water is the best time to scout out any cracks or leaks that may need to be filled or repaired after the boat's been lifted. Take a photo or make a quite note of where the damage is that can be easily referred to.
- Empty as much as you can from the boat, in particular anything of any value (VHF radios, fishfinders, engines etc). Once the boat is on dry land on the hardstanding it makes removing items much more difficult. Ensure your cupboards and lockers are empty and take the time to rinse them out with fresh water and leave them open. Also remove the speed transducer impeller as well to avoid any potential damage caused by the crane strops.
- Check the mast rigging and make sure everything's okay. If there're any problems then they can be fixed at a much more convenient time after the mast has been taken down. If you're planning to keep the mast up then also remember to remove any lights or instruments so that they can be checked for damaged. They'll also last longer. If you're planning on taking the mast down then coil them nearly at the mast foot or remove them altogether. Any oil bottlescrews should be oiled and slackened a few turns.
- Also make sure you've removed furnishing and cushions – anything soft – as they'd be very susceptible to damp and could cause mildew if left on board. If taking them home is not an option, make sure they're stored propped up and in an area that has good air circulation.
- Also ensure that you remove your sails and either store them at home or where they can be cleaned off and left to dry. Any sail repairs should be undertaken now while it's quiet.
- It's also the best time to get your liferaft serviced so that you're not stuck in a backlog next Spring and you'll have it all ready to go.
- Completely drain your water tank. If you have a flexible water tank then they can be taken home and scrubbed with a bottlebrush. If you have a fixed water tank then let a Milton solution stand first before the water is drained. Make sure any water heaters or calorifiers are drained and emptied, too. Water tanks and pipes must be completely drained so that, if a cold spell hits, no damage can be caused from freezing.
- Completely fill up your fuel tank to leave no room for condensation and consider adding a fuel additive to eliminate the risk of developing diesel bug.

## Preparing the Engine

It is essential that your engine is properly prepared for the winter months. A few simple jobs will help protect the engine and prevent any damage and huge repair bills.

- If your boat has a raw water-cooled engine then make sure you flush it through with a mixture of fresh water and antifreeze. Once it has been flushed pour in some antifreeze solution and stop the engine. If your boat has a closed-circuit cooling system, then make sure the antifreeze level is topped up.
- Whilst the engine is still warm give the oil a complete change to prevent any internal corrosion and to protect the engine over winter.
- Block the air intake and exhaust pipe to prevent any possible debris from getting in (an old cloth will be fine) and cover the engine if you're planning any maintenance to prevent dust or debris from getting in.
- Cover the propeller with a bucket to protect yourself from injury.

## After your boat has been lifted

Now that your boat is out of the water, we can finalise any preparation and cleaning ready for storage.

- Give the whole boat a good wash down with fresh water. Salt attracts moisture so you'll need to wash as much off as you can to keep the boat drier over the winter. It'll also help prevent any dirt accumulating.
- Disconnect and remove the gas bottle, or at the very least disconnect it so that it cannot leak.
- Remove any canvas sprayhoods and dodgers to keep them in good condition and to prevent them from getting damaged in bad weather.
- Disconnect any auto bilge pumps as they could drain your battery or burn out.
- If you can, it's recommended that you give your bilge a rinse and dry to keep everything smelling fresh. Keeping your bilge well ventilated will keep the air circulating and prevent any potential bad odours.
- Remove all food from your boat as mice and vermin can be attracted by it. Once they're in they're very difficult to remove and can chew through wires and fixings.
- Keep any ladders well padlocked up and secure as an unsecured ladder is an open invitation to thieves.
- Once everything has been done, a decent cover will keep your boat clean and dry and prevent dirt and grime buildup.

## Protection from the Cold

- Protecting your boat from the elements during the winter months is essential and can prevent the possibility of huge repair bills at the start of the following season.
- After you've removed the sails, ensure that you also remove any furling jibs which can flog loose and potentially cause damage to yours and surrounding boats during windy weather.
- Clear all cockpit drains and scuppers so that water cannot pool and freeze. Remember to check up on these over winter to make sure no debris has blocked them.
- Batteries can be damaged in the cold, so if you're able to they should be removed. If this is not possible, a solar panel powered trickle charge will help keep the battery healthy. Make sure your battery is topped up with de-ionised water if you're using a lead-acid kind.
- All seacocks should be flushed through to remove any salt buildup and then re-greased. This will prevent them from seizing up. Blakes style seacocks should have the barrels removed.
- Dehumidifiers and heaters will keep moisture and mildew at bay, and keep everything as well-ventilated as possible. Make sure any hatches are set to the vent setting to keep the air flowing. If you're using an electric dehumidifier then make sure there's somewhere for the water to drain out through.