

CARE OF THE KEEL*

Fleets, like their owners, are aging. What to do about problems associated with keels is a concern second only to that of centreboards.

Iron keels are generally cast with the starboard side down. As a result, the port side is flatter, contains more irregularities and impurities, such as slog, and therefore corrodes faster.

Further, when the boat is hauled and when it is launched, or when the rigging is tightened, the hull flexes but the keel does not. Consequently, stress and crevice corrosion is liable to affect keel bolts and their tapped holes—which could go right through to the flange. As well, water might get in underneath the keel paint at the top. (One might see the paint turn as the aft keel bolt is unscrewed a little. . . forward the keel is thicker.)

To modify these stresses, the joint between the keel and the hull may need to be cleaned out and filled with a flexible caulking compound. Do this after providing a barrier coat of waterproof epoxy, POR 15 or Pettit's Rust Lok, and before the final antifouling coat.

Should one wish to repair the keel, i.e. building up the flat port side into a smooth curve—it appears, at least in the Tanzer classes, that a limit to the dimensions of the keel build up has not been legislated. A free hand here!

Rust, much worse in salt water than in fresh, is the recurring problem with iron keels. Elaborate and expensive treatments seem to provide no permanent solutions. The water finds its way in and rust inevitably follows! Fighting it is an annual affair.

A wire brush and a putty knife will get rid of the loose, visible rust—no need to go down to bare metal. Paint rusted spots with a couple of coats of POR 15 or Pettit's Rust Lok. Both paints are hygroscopic, a humid day will help them cure faster. Wear rubber gloves as they adhere to the skin and are all but impossible to remove. Finish with a coat of anti-fouling. In the fall, when the boat is hauled out, it will be almost rust free. By the following spring, a few more rust spots will show—nothing like a big problem to deal with then.

* Information gleaned from letters in *Tanzer Talk* (May/June/99 edition), the newsletter of the Tanzer Sailing Association.